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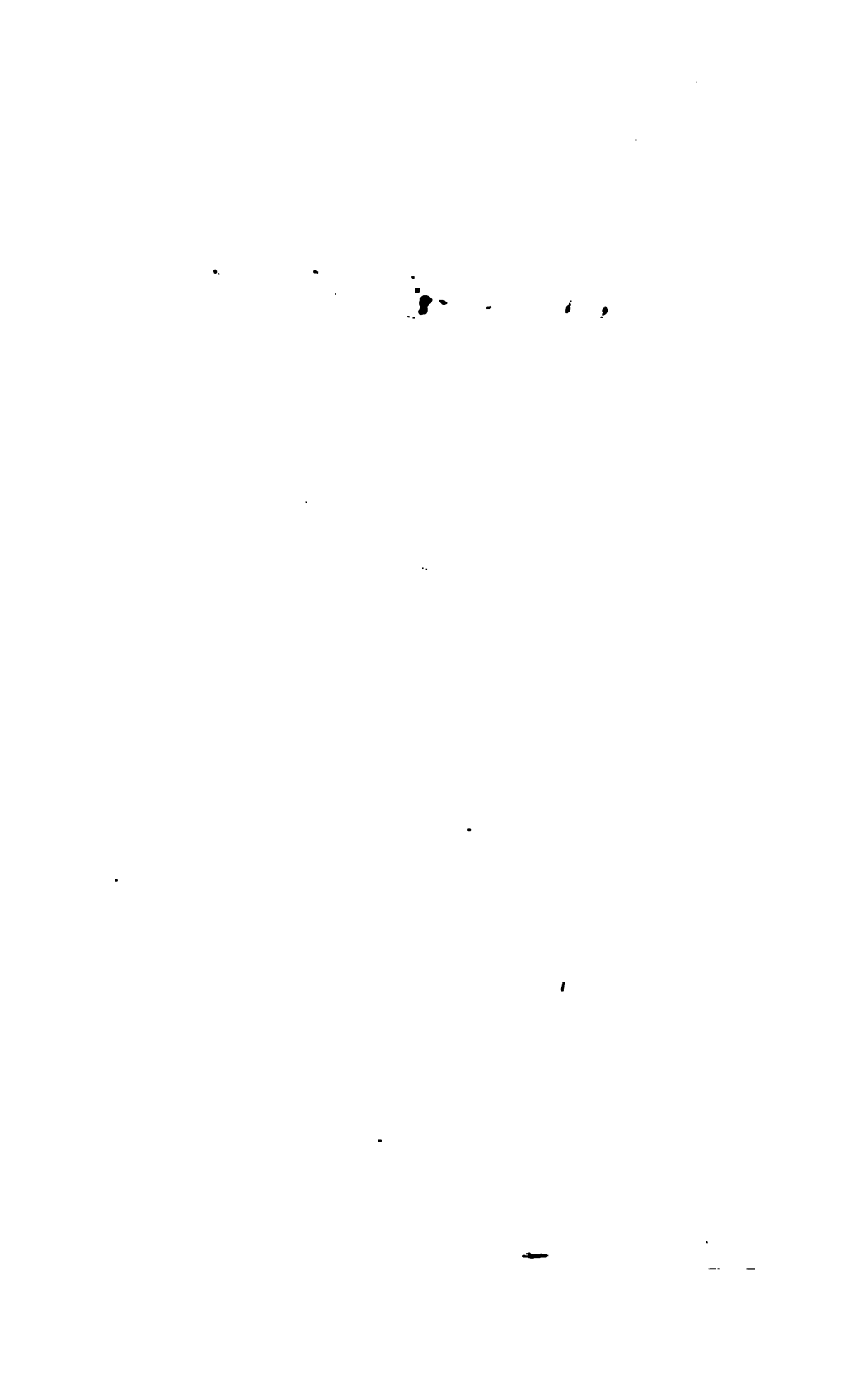
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ALICE PAULET:

By Alice

A SEQUEL TO

683-62

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OR,

1833

MEMOIRS OF A MAN OF THE WORLD. 2

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SYDENHAM."

W. Masie

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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ALICE PAULET:

A SEQUEL TO

"SYDENHAM."

CHAPTER I.

THE society of the fox-hunters, whom I found to be, for the most part, country gentlemen, the principal business of whose lives was field sports, would have offered me few attractions, even had I no other resource; and that of the Priory would have been delightful to me, even had I not been drawn thither by the one all-powerful allurements which it presented. My red coat, therefore, was but rarely assumed, and when I did appear in the field, I was urged thither more by a consciousness, that it was necessary to keep up the pretext, under which I had taken up my abode in the neighbourhood, than by a love of the noble exercise. In fact, scarcely a day elapsed that I did not see some of the party, and two or three evenings in every week were passed at the Priory. At many of these domestic *soirées*, certainly, I met Captain Axford, but my hostility toward that personage gradually diminished, as my persuasion grew more certain, that he was not preferred to myself in Miss Paulet's regards. The mysterious and alarming embarrassment observable in her manner toward young Axford in the first days of their intercourse, after his unwelcome apparition in the country, had now entirely disappeared, and she behaved to him with the frankness and cordiality of a sister, indeed, but there was no longer anything in her conduct, from which an experienced eye could have suspected that he was the object of a tenderer

feeling. In her bearing with respect to me, on the contrary, there was more restraint, and generally more gravity; but from this very distinction of demeanour, slight as it was, I derived the greatest consolation and happiness.

But in proportion as I grew more complacent toward young Axford for the cause stated, his manner became more stiff to me, perhaps for an opposite reason. Occasionally, indeed, he was almost rude and insolent: this treatment, however, I tolerated with indulgence, having myself so lately experienced the same painful sentiments, under which he was then suffering. I should observe, however, that in the presence of any of the Paulet family, I was not exposed to anything like coldness or incivility from Captain Axford. In truth, I heartily pitied him, for, to a susceptible character like this young man, hopeless love must have been the devil.

For my own part, my attachment to Alice Paulet daily acquired new strength, although I carefully abstained from exhibiting externally any decided symptoms of it until I had satisfactorily ascertained whether my exertions to inspire her with a reciprocal feeling had been successful. Upon this object, as I have before said, all my energies were bent; and in the pursuit of it my character seemed to undergo a partial change, insomuch that many of my former acquaintances would, I think, have scarcely recognized the cold-blooded, sarcastic, dissolute Sydenham, in the kind, considerate, and amiable being into which I was transformed. Accustomed as I had ever been, and possessing a natural facility, to adapt myself to my company, it was not difficult for me to assume these virtues, without the semblance of which no man of any discrimination would have dared to approach this pure and high-minded girl in the capacity of a candidate for her respect and affection. But I must do myself the justice to say, that I did not wear the external form of these amiable qualities merely for the purpose of recommending myself to Miss Paulet. One beneficial effect of my intercourse with her charming family was to make me shamefully sensible of my own defects, and to inspire me with a hearty disgust and contempt for those vices and fooleries, in the practice of which I had formerly taken some sort of pride and pleasure. In fact, I think most of my irregularities proceeded less from innate corruption, than from a disbelief in the existence of virtue: and my private opinion of my own character now is, that I was naturally endowed with an extreme fastidiousness, and an acute perception of vice and folly, the essence of a

satirical temper, which, being shocked and confirmed by early experience, gave a turn to my character totally different from that which it would probably have taken, had my lot been cast among better specimens of human nature than those which had been hitherto my fortune to encounter. Whether this notion be warranted by the disclosures of these volumes, the reader may form a sounder judgment than I can, for I do not pretend to that knowledge, which has been well qualified the highest wisdom—the knowledge of oneself.

Be this, however, as it may, the truth is, that under the benign influence of Alice Paulet and her relatives, I became sensible of a growing distaste to my former habits, and of the wickedness and weakness of the style of thinking and acting to which I had hitherto accorded. I began to understand that I was not endowed with worldly advantages merely for the gratification of selfish caprices, and that if I was blessed with talents, they were given to me less for my own private advantage, than for the benefit and happiness of mankind. Whatever might be my speculative opinions as to virtue or religion, I had no right, either by my conduct or conversation, to bring into contempt two principles which were, to give them their least praise, essential to the existence of every civilized community. I felt, likewise, that I should beware how I recklessly brandished that weapon of satire, lest I should thereby wound innocent and well-meaning persons, as I could not but be conscious I had frequently done; if I could wield it with dexterity and force, let its attacks be exclusively directed against hypocrisy and affectation, for the destruction of which it is peculiarly fitted.

Could anything be more profligate, said I to myself, than my political conduct? Did I not from first to last abuse the share which I took in public life? In the first instance, I deceived the constituents whom I addressed, by representing myself to them as the personification of an upright, independent, and able member of Parliament, in contradistinction to the dishonesty, tyranny, and incapacity which I opposed. Yet, had these people sent me to the House of Commons, was it my intention to have acted in accordance to my professions? The bare idea of such a thing never crossed my mind. My object was to display the address of which I was master, and to secure a personal gratification. From the hustings, where I had, in the strongest language, eulogized political integrity, and denounced cajolery and jobbing, I passed, with a bank bill in my pocket, to the house of an in-

fluential voter, and purchased a seat for a rotten borough. Placed in Parliament, I chose my party without the slightest respect to my opinion of their public character, but as my personal inclination directed me. True, that I did not enter upon public life with any sordid view—true, that I refused office—true, that I broke away from my party connexions, when full of vigour and hope, to support a falling man and a ruined cause, because I thought that man abused, and his cause good; but what merit could I conscientiously claim for either of these acts? If my necessities had been pressing, or my disposition avaricious—if my ambition could have been content with subordinate power—if there had been less glare of magnanimity in sacrificing myself to a great man, who was the victim of treachery and cunning unknown to his noble nature—dare I assert my conviction that I should have spurned place, abandoned my party, and declared for Anstruther? In fact, had I not mingled in politics from a motive pretty much of the same kind as that which actuates those hypocrites, who, as the poet informs us,

“—— To church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there ?”

All this I inwardly resolved shall be amended in the event of one contingency—my union with Alice Paulet! Already I felt a happier, because a wiser, and, in good resolutions, a better man. The day on which my happiness was consummated, I fixed as the commencement of a new life, the principles of which should be virtue and utility. That I should be competent to carry this plan into execution, provided I were successful in my present object, I had little doubt, for under the influence of my better self, my sluggishness would be stimulated, my indecision confirmed, and, the form of Alice being continually interposed between me and temptation, I should be preserved from any danger of relapsing into my former habits.

CHAPTER II.

THAT the elder Axforde were desirous to bring about a connexion between their family and the Pauleys, through the medium of Alice and their son, was very evident. Lady Susan, indeed, being a woman of the world, did not manifest her feelings very openly, but the old gentleman was quite fussy and nervous about the matter. He had lately become, what he had never been before, a continual visitor at the Pauleys, cultivating their acquaintance with the utmost assiduity, making dinners for them, and paying them all the court imaginable. Then, Lady Susan had conceived such an affection for dear Alice, whom she must carry away by force to come and spend a few days with her; whereupon Alice, that she might not offend a person who professes such cordiality to her, is obliged to comply, however much against her inclination, as she hints to me upon my looking rather grave, when informed that she is going to spend a week with the Axforde.

One day in this week, (during which I passed a *little* less of my time at the Priory than ordinarily,) Mr. Axford paid me a visit, and though he had called on me several times before, I happened then to be at home, for the first time when he did me that honour.

"Pretty place you have here, Sir Matthew," said my visitor, with a condescending air.

"A mere hut, Mr. Axford," answered I; "I'm ashamed to receive you in it, accustomed as you are to your noble mansion and its spacious and splendid apartments."

"A comfortable house, Sir Matthew—a comfortable house—nothing more; I dare say you've as good a one at Sydenham?"

"Now, my good Sir, you are quizzing me; my residence may be good enough for me, but shrinks into insignificance, indeed, compared with Axford Hall."

"Ay, indeed?—no, I dare say not, eh?" returned the old gentleman, who could scarcely suppress his gratification at

this information: "You're a man of fortune, Sir Matthew," he added, importantly.

"To some I might appear so," was my reply; "but scarcely to *you*: barely eight thousand a year, Mr. Axford, I assure you."

"Ay, but Sir Matthew, let me tell you, that eight thousand a year is a very pretty fortune, (do you understand?) and may enable a bachelor to keep up a very good—nay, a very handsome appearance, (do you observe?)—provided he is prudent; indeed, I know many married people who haven't more, (do you see?) yet manage, by proper economy, to do the thing in very respectable style, mark me."

"True, my dear Sir, true; it is enough, as you say, with prudence and economy; I've no right to complain: there are poor wretches who have wives and families to support out of scarcely as many hundreds."

"Ah! certainly, poor creatures!—one half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives. But talking of this pretty spot which you occupy just now, I'm thinking of buying it; (you understand?)"

"Indeed! I shall be happy to become your tenant," answered I.

"Precisely, Sir Matthew; I should, of course, be too happy to be landlord to such a tenant as you; (do you understand?) but as I can't always hope for such a piece of good fortune, it is my purpose to pull the house down upon the expiration of the period for which you have taken it, (you observe?)"

"Would not that be a pity? Such a pretty villa, and so well situated!"

"Why, the fact is, to tell you the truth, we find these little places a great nuisance in our neighbourhood, (do you understand?) being generally taken by people who are very good sort of people in their way—excellent people in their own class; but not exactly (do you observe?) the kind one likes altogether to associate with—you understand what I mean?"

"Perfectly; I quite enter into your feelings."

"Now, I was talking the other day upon this subject with our friend Mr. Paulet, and I could not make him understand it. He said that it was making wealth the criterion, which you know is not at all the way of viewing the matter; I should be the last man in the world to say that wealth is the criterion, for there are many persons of great merit who are poor; but as a general rule, (you understand?) I think one

CHAPTER III.

Nothing could more strongly attest the character of the Paulet family, than the respect and affection in which it was held by the tenantry and poor of the neighbourhood. I had opportunities of becoming acquainted with this fact; for, according to my custom, I frequently conversed with the villagers, and sat down in their cottages. Admiring the Paulets as I did, and considering the relation in which I stood—or rather hoped to stand, with regard to them, it was delightful to observe the alacrity and earnestness with which the humbler classes, within their influence, sounded their praises. Mr. Paulet was described as the kindest of landlords, and the noblest of gentlemen; his wife, though comparatively a stranger to them, was much admired, and would have sooner and more easily made her way into their hearts, had they not been already occupied by her divine sister, with whose superior character they seemed to be strongly impressed. “Lady Jane,” said a farmer’s wife to me, “is a sweet, good-tempered young lady; but she haven’t the same thought like Miss Paulet, who is an angel, if ever there was an angel upon earth. I’ve known her ever since she was not so high as the table, when my lady, her mamma, who was then alive, used to take her with her when she went to visit the poor people; and she was such a sensible child, too, as well as gen’rous! I remember, as if ’twas but yesterday, she once met a beggar on the road, and gave all her pocket-money to him, and afterwards it turned out he was an impostor; and little Miss Alice, when she heard it, said she would never give money again to a stranger, without inquiring whether he was really in want; ‘For if I give,’ says she, ‘to them I know nothing about, I shall have nothing left for those who I know are really deserving.’ But she had a good education and example, Sir, in the dear lady, her mamma, who was just then what Miss Alice is now, except a little older, and more mallancholy.”

This was a topic of which I could never tire; so I allowed the good woman to proceed, which she did with little en-

couragement, and she dilated with rude, but honest enthusiasm, upon all the good qualities of her dearest Miss Alice, whom she loved like her own child, if she might make so bold as to say so.

"What will you do when you lose her, Mrs. Johnson?" said I, as we became better acquainted; "for you must expect now that she will soon be choosing a home of her own."

"God send her a happy home then, and a good husband, dear young lady! for there's none more deserving of it, be the other who she may: but 'tis said Miss Alice is to be married to young Squire Axford, which I hope may be true, for then we sha'n't lose her."

"Ay, indeed? to Captain Axford?"

"Yes, Sir, so 'tis said, but it mayn't be true; perhaps you can tell, Sir?"

"I wish I could, Ma'am," answered I, with more depth of sincerity than my friend probably suspected; "but whoever her choice may be, I trust he will be worthy of her."

"That, Sir, he cannot be, (saving your presence)," answered the woman; "no man can be worthy of such an angel. But this I'm sure, Miss Alice will never go to church with any of your common sort of gentlemen; she'll never marry a man because he's rich, or great; like Miss Axford t'other day, who married that old Lord for his grandeur, and nothing else; for he's a name for all sorts of wickedness, and keeps a lot of women—nasty old fellow! Many's the great lord and fine gentlemen as have courted Miss Alice, to my certain knowledge, but she wouldn't have nothing to say to any of them; for she's none of your ladies who are all for outside show, and don't care a brass farden what a man is in hisself, if so be ashe've got wealth or titles."

"What then, Mrs. Johnson," said I, "you think Miss Paulet so disinterested?"

"Think, Sir?" reiterated she, "I knows her to be so; she wouldn't marry a prince without she liked him, and she'd never like him unless he was deserving of her esteem."

Such were Mrs. Johnson's testimonials to the character of Alice. Perhaps it may be considered bad taste, or at least unnecessary, to quote the opinions of a person so humble; in which case, I must beg the gracious reader to recollect, that on this subject I may not be altogether master of my usual discretion, on account of the deep interest which I feel in it; my wish being to possess him with as high an opinion of this young lady's virtues, as that which I myself entertained. I

must—that is to say—in fact, you know what I mean—it is necessary to draw a line, for it is embarrassing to be brought into contact with people whom, however deserving and respectable, one doesn't meet with in society (you observe?)”

“I know the sort of people you mean—*demi-fortunes*—an abominable class.”

“You’ve just said it; situated as we are (you comprehend?) happening to have a large connexion, and being obliged to keep up an establishment, and to live in a little style, acquaintances of that kind we find exceedingly inconvenient, as you can easily believe.”

“Undoubtedly; your connexions being all in high life.”

“Why, yes, so it happens.—What a good view you have of the Priory from here,” proceeded he, rising and going to the window:—“by the by, what a charming family they are; have you known them long?”

“About two years.”

“He will be Marquis of Truro,” said Mr. Axford, half soliloquizing, half addressing me.

“He has a very good chance, certainly,” I replied.

“Chance!” rejoined Axford, quickly, “more than a chance; I should think it might almost be called a certainty: he is, you know, next heir to his uncle, who will never marry again, I should suppose?”

“It is not very probable perhaps,” answered I.

“I know not any man better fitted to grace a title than my friend Paulet; his manners are those of a prince.”

To this eulogium I assented, and Mr. Axford proceeded.

“What a pity that that sweet girl, his sister, should not at the same time become Lady Alice! I look upon that as a very hard case.”

“I dare say that she will be painfully sensible of it.”

“But I should think he would be able to get her name put in the patent—such things have been done, you know; for instance—” and he named some precedents.

“Doubtless it will be done,” I observed.

“Their succession, too, will most likely not be very remote.”

“I believe the Marquis is an old man.”

“His health is, I fancy, indifferent, and he is in his sixtieth year.”

“You know by the Peerage?” inquired I.

“Why, yes,” answered Axford with some confusion; “I was looking there for something else the other day, and my

eye happened to light upon this title, so I had the curiosity just to look. Lady Alice—that is to say—I mean, Miss Paulet, is staying with Lady Susan just now; a very highly-gifted and charming young woman, Sir Matthew.”

“Yes, indeed,” answered I, indifferently, “she’s a very nice girl.”

“No fortune, I believe? but that’s not much matter.”

“Has she not?” said I, in the same tone; “I didn’t know.”

After some farther general conversation, not worthy of detail, Mr. Axford took his leave; but the reader will judge from that which is above related, whether this gentleman had it in contemplation to connect his house with that of Mr. Paulet, and what was his motive for wishing to bring about such an end.

Mistake

am apprehensive, therefore, lest my zeal should get the better of my judgment, and frustrate that which it would accomplish. I fear, indeed, that since I have become a lover, whatever little attraction I might have hitherto offered, is disappearing, and that it might be good policy to bid the reader adieu, before he begins to yawn. But having proceeded thus far, possibly he may have conceived sufficient interest in the humble autobiographer, to be desirous of knowing the issue of his adventures in this (to him) most interesting and important passage of his life. With this hope, I venture to continue my memoirs.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE evening, when I was at the Priory, a letter was delivered to Mr. Panlet, and perused by him with earnest attention, which Lady Jane observing, expressed her hope that it contained no unpleasant news.

"On the contrary," answered her husband, smiling, "it contains very cheerful news, for it announces the writer's intended marriage."

"And who is the writer, may I ask?"

"My uncle Truro."

"Your uncle Truro!" echoed Lady Jane, in incredulous astonishment.

"My uncle going to be married!" cried Miss Paulet, with almost equal surprise.

"It is most true," repeated Mr. Paulet; "we are neither of us, I believe, acquainted with the young lady, but he describes her as a person of great beauty and accomplishments. You shall hear what he says. After a few preliminary remarks, he proceeds:—"

"At my time of life, you will not, perhaps, my dear St. Leger, be prepared for such a measure as I have resolved upon; and I know, that by the class of persons, who take so deep an interest in the concerns of their neighbours, my conduct will be pretty freely discussed and commented upon; but I have lived too long in the world to be deterred by public opinion from doing what I please. I am satisfied that you will not misjudge me; for though the step which I am about to take, may frustrate the hopes which it is probable you have indulged, you have too much good sense and good feeling to consider yourself aggrieved by it.

"The lady, upon whom my choice has fixed, is Mrs. Cleghorn; niece, by marriage, to Sir Lionel Cleghorn. The match is, I think, upon the whole, not an unsuitable one. Mrs. C. is not a young girl, but a woman of between thirty and forty; she has great personal charms, and is highly amiable: I have received the most gratifying marks of her attachment to me, which is, I think, devoted; so that I may

reasonably calculate on a good deal of happiness. The day is fixed for the twenty-third of this month, and I hope that you will attend the celebration of the ceremony.' "

Lady Jane, who had listened to this extract with a countenance alternately betraying vexation and a sense of the ludicrous, now laughed outright.

"Was there ever such an absurd old man?" said she.

"I think," said Miss Paulet, "his letter affords a strong suspicion that he has been practised upon by some unprincipled adventurer: will you not interpose to prevent it, St. Leger?"

But the romantic delicacy of Paulet would not permit him to entertain any such purpose. "It would be impossible for me," said he, "situated as I am, to interpose with effect; my motives would be liable to misconstruction, and I should only irritate or offend my uncle by the attempt: for the resolutions, or whims, if you choose to call them so, of old people, are generally obstinate or imperturbable. I shall attend the marriage, certainly, and in the mean time, for our own satisfaction make some inquiries about Mrs. Cleghorn."

"I have heard of a statute of lunacy," said Lady Jane, "but there is no such thing as a statute of folly, to prevent silly people from injuring themselves and others? I am sure it would be of much more general application."

"There are many statutes of folly, my dear Lady Jane," observed I, "but I'm afraid none to meet your particular views."

"Suppose, then, we draw up a bill together, and it shall be intitled, 'A Bill for the better regulation of his Majesty's imbecile subjects.' "

"I am glad you find it so good a joke," remarked Alice, dryly.

"Indeed, I think it no joke," answered her lively sister-in-law; "I expect, as soon as the melancholy event becomes known, that we shall receive visits and letters of condolence from our friends, and of ironical congratulation from our enemies—if we have any. But, seriously, St. Leger, I'm sorry for it only on your account."

"Then dismiss your sorrow, my love," replied her husband; "for believe me, as far as I am personally affected by this matter, it does not afford me one moment's uneasiness; and I will not pay you so bad a compliment, as to suppose that you will be seriously disappointed at the change, which my uncle's marriage may make in our prospects."

"If you are satisfied," returned Lady Jane, "I am delighted; for, to tell you the truth, I was selfish enough to look forward with dread to this change, which I feared would oblige us to live more in the world, leave the dear Priory perhaps, and, in short, break up our present life of happiness."

Paulet regarded his lovely wife, as she spoke, with a look of fondness and admiration. I likewise bent my eyes upon Alice, who did not seem so perfectly well pleased with the new turn which events were about to take. Certainly, it was vexatious, that a weak-minded old man should become the dupe of a designing woman, and that the reasonable expectations of her brother should thereby be disappointed; but as he himself and his wife, the party principally interested, bore the misfortune with equanimity, I was not quite pleased that Miss Paulet, whom I understood to be superior to the vulgar consideration of rank and wealth, should seem the most disconcerted by the intelligence.

At a subsequent opportunity I did not hesitate to make this remark to her, our intimacy being sufficient to warrant such a freedom.

"I will own to you," answered she, "that I do regret my brother's being deprived of these expectations; not because I think that any accession of rank or fortune would add to his personal happiness, for his resources are independent of outward circumstances; but because I am partial enough to believe, that if he were master of extended means, others would benefit by them to a greater degree, perhaps, than if they were in other hands."

"Does it not strike you, then," said I, "that his happiness would rather be diminished by an increase of rank and wealth? insomuch as they would prefer claims upon such a mind as his, inconsistent with that domestic quietude which seems best suited to his temper."

"But, my dear Sir Matthew, ought such a selfish consideration to deter him from wishing that these claims should be imposed upon him? On the contrary, however, I am convinced that St. Leger's happiness would be increased rather than lessened, by having to discharge the duties of a higher station, and more ample endowments. His happiness would be on a larger scale than that which he can enjoy at present; for he, of all men, would be the most susceptible of that most exalted happiness which is derived from the contemplation of

that of others, which you yourself are conscious of having promoted."

"Ah, my dear Miss Paulet," answered I, "would that all great and rich men considered themselves as the stewards of Providence! What blessed effects might not the friends of humanity hope to see realized, if one may judge from the happiness which reigns within the sphere of the few, who think, and have the power to act, like your brother!"

CHAPTER V.

ALTHOUGH I took the liberty of endeavouring to persuade him, that he could be guilty of no impropriety in interposing to prevent his uncle from becoming the dupe of a woman who, upon the face of the circumstances, evidently must have cajoled the old man, Mr. Paulet resolutely declined offering any obstacle to the consummation of the event which was to deprive him of such great advantages. Such was the purity of his intentions, and the sensitiveness of his honour, that he seemed to feel that his motives and character were, like Cæsar's wife, "not even to be suspected." Some, perhaps, will be disposed to pronounce this fastidiousness over-fine, or to censure it as denoting selfishness, or too much regard to the world's opinion. His sister indeed, I think, perceived that this objection might be made to his conduct, for when I told her that I could make nothing of him, she said, "His delicacy is certainly too refined; but nevertheless, surely one can hardly help admiring, and feeling reluctant to attempt destroying it. If this silly marriage of my uncle's were a matter personally indifferent to St. Leger, or more especially, if it could have so happened that his interests would have benefited by it, he would have gone to the world's end to prevent it, and frustrate imposture. But, as it is, I fear we shall find him inflexible."

All that he purposed doing, was to make inquiries about the lady's character, which if he should ascertain upon good authority to be questionable, he would immediately represent to his uncle to save him and his family from the disgrace of a tainted alliance. Unfortunately, however, the evidence which he procured did not tend to any doubt that Mrs. Cleg-horn's character (*par excellence*) was otherwise than unimpeachably "correct." It appeared that she lived under the protection of her mother, a lady in limited circumstances, and that she had contrived to get acquainted with Lord Truro at a watering-place, had diligently improved their intercourse, and had at length rendered her society and attentions necessary to the silly old man; in short, it was evidently a com-

plete job. That it was so, Mr. Paulet did not deny, but, satisfied that she was a respectable person, he could not consider himself authorized to interfere any farther, observing, that his uncle was old enough to judge for himself.

"Old enough!" said Lady Jane, "*too old* it should seem."

However, be that as it may, things being suffered to take their course, in another fortnight the bride-cake and the favours arrived at the Priory, with the Marquis and Marchioness of Truro's love and kindest regards to the Lady Jane and Miss Paulet! Mr. Paulet having gone to attend the marriage. He followed hard upon the heels of the said bride-cake and favours, having quitted the house immediately after he had seen the "happy couple set off in their travelling carriage-and-four to pass the honey-moon at his Lordship's splendid seat T——, B—shire!"

His account of the bride was such as might have been expected. She was a pretty woman, with forward manners; and received him, as he observed with a smile, with all the courtesy and kindness which she thought due to her husband's near relative; hoped that he would be a frequent guest at T——, and that she should soon have the pleasure of being introduced to Lady Jane and his sister, of whom she had heard so much. As to Lord Truro, he was very much in love, and presented his bride-elect to his nephew with an air of pride and complacency which seemed to claim a compliment to his good taste and good fortune. The Marchioness's family were Irish, and from what Mr. Paulet mentioned of them, I inferred, although he did not say so explicitly, *low Irish*, who, from the specimens which I have occasionally seen of that class, would seem to be the most disgusting savages under the sun. The mother he described as being a very homely person. There was a brother also, and a sister of the bride's, whom he had not seen; they were in Ireland, but *coming over*, as he was informed. In fact, it was quite clear, that they were a low set, and I was surprised at the forbearance with which Paulet spoke of them. It was, of course, impossible that he could approve of the alliance which his uncle had formed, and indeed it seemed to give him more annoyance than the marriage itself, which, greatly as his interests were affected by it, he bore with philosophical calmness.

CHAPTER VI.

AMONG the friends who sympathized with Mr. Paulet on the 'untoward event' (to borrow a felicitous diplomatic phrase of recent invention) which had occurred in his family, the Axfords were pre-eminent. A day or two after its public announcement, I met the important gentleman himself, and his first word was, a lament for the sad calamity which had befallen poor Paulet. "I have not seen them since," said he; "how do they bear it?"

"As well as can be expected," answered I.

"Well, who could have thought of such a thing?" pursued Mr. Axford, "it must have come like a thunder-clap upon them; for if Paulet had known of it soon enough, he would, of course have moved heaven and earth to prevent it. But what could have induced him to attend the wedding! I don't comprehend that; I think he was mistaken in his policy there; (do you understand?)"

"Why, between ourselves, I don't think our friend is much of a politician."

"Why no, no, I don't think he is; I don't think he is, Sir Matthew; if he had played his cards well, (do you observe?) this could never have happened; that's my firm opinion. He should never have let the old man out of his sight, (don't you understand?) you see he is lost by being too secure."

"In fact," said I, "it was a mismanaged business altogether, or rather, I should say, it was never managed at all."

"Ay, there it was, there it was; he never went about the thing like a man of the world. It's nothing to me personally, (you understand?) but I can't help feeling vexed and angry to see a man throw away fortune in such a manner. But perhaps there's some hope yet; she's a young woman, to be sure, but he's an old man, eh? and they mayn't have children, eh? What do you think?"

"I'm afraid there is but a slight chance in that quarter. Lord Truro is, I am told, a fine hale old fellow."

"Um! well, I can't help wondering how a man of sense like Paulet should have taken his measures so ill as to suffer

such a business to be brought about. Good morning, Sir Matthew."

From that day forth I observed a change in the manner of the Axfords toward the family at the Priory, and especially to that member of it who had hitherto been the object of their importunate attentions. Lady Susan could now contrive to live without her, and the epithets of endearment and eulogy which she had been wont to lavish upon "her sweet, incomparable Alice," began to be moderated. The Paulets were either unconscious of this drawing off, or did not choose to take notice of it. Indeed it could have given them little concern, for the Axford family (except one) were never prime favourites at the Priory, where their advances were not encouraged by any reciprocal conduct beyond that, which good neighbourhood demanded. The exception named, however, had, as the reader is aware, been always treated with distinguished kindness and consideration, more particularly by her to whom his regards seemed to be chiefly directed; but the amiable character and agreeable conversation of the young man justified this distinction. On the present occasion, his visits became gradually less frequent, but, at the same time, his spirits seemed to be depressed, and his manner toward the Paulets was more earnestly affectionate than usual. Alice Paulet likewise, I thought, again betrayed symptoms of care and uneasiness in his presence. These indications might have alarmed me, but I had not long since determined not to suffer my confidence to be disturbed by her friendship for Captain Axford. Even my scepticism was at length satisfied of her genuineness, and none of those assassin-like suspicions which were continually lurking about my mind, now dared to approach the purity of this character, consecrated to my love and to my happiness. As surely as I knew that she was incapable of playing a double part, so certainly was she free from any taint of coquetry, and she would never encourage my passion, which her woman's eye could scarcely have failed to perceive, had she fixed her affections upon another person; and though I will not deny that I should have been glad to have heard some explanation of her marked kindness toward young Axford, whose merits seemed scarcely to warrant such proofs of esteem from a character like her's, I could not permit myself to think that her conduct was otherwise than irreproachable.

CHAPTER VII.

As it happened, an incident soon occurred which offered a practical proof of the altered state of feeling of the Axford family toward their dear friends at the Priory. One of the members for the county vacated his seat by taking office, and upon this occasion Mr. Paulet determined upon offering himself as a candidate. His family had long represented the county, and he himself had been more than once urged to stand, with certainty of success; but, having little taste for politics, he had declined preferring his pretensions, on the ground that the gentlemen then in possession of it, were well worthy the confidence of the electors. The reason which he stated in his advertisement for coming forward at that instant was, that the right honourable gentleman having identified himself with an administration founded by intrigue and supported by corruption, manifesting no fixed line of conduct, and comprising in itself the elements of dishonesty and discord, had, in his opinion, forfeited his claim upon the confidence of his constituents. He therefore solicited the suffrages of those who respected political integrity, and thought with him that it had been violated by Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Axford, who, be it observed, was himself member for another county, in which he had large property, had often declared in my presence, that his great pride and pleasure would be to see Mr. Paulet and his son the representatives of B——shire, but that if any contingency should arise to vacate one seat only, Mr. Paulet should have the refusal of it as far as he was concerned, and that if it was his pleasure to come forward, he should be supported by the whole weight of his (Mr. Axford's) influence. No sooner, therefore, had Paulet determined upon taking advantage of the present opportunity, than he apprized Mr. Axford thereof; and, to his surprise, he received an answer from that gentleman, expressing his deep regret that Mr. Paulet should have come to such a determination, inasmuch as he had arrived at a similar resolution to offer his son for the choice of the freeholders, and ended by hoping that they might be able to compromise it. Mr. Paulet

promptly and briefly replied, that much as he could wish to avoid being placed in an attitude of hostility to Mr. Axford or his son, he could not suffer private considerations to affect the resolution which he had adopted; and that, unless a candidate of superior pretensions should offer himself in the mean time, he should certainly go to the poll. At the same time that he despatched this note, he sent his advertisement to be published.

To this decisive communication there was no rejoinder, but concurrently with Paulet's address appeared another, written in a flourishing and fulsome style, and signed "George Axford." This document excited a strong sensation at the Priory; Paulet was much hurt by his friend's conduct. Lady Jane fired at the slightest injury offered to her husband, but at the same time retaining a strong regard for young Axford, alternately abused him in passionate terms, and wept "that those odious politics should occasion breaches between friends, which would never otherwise have happened." Alice defended him to the last, declaring with more earnestness than I thought necessary, that he was incapable of an ungenerous action, and that, in the present instance, she felt confident that he was acting solely under the influence of his father.

Her good opinion, however, was justified. The rival advertisements had been only a few hours before the public, when Captain Axford came in great haste and agitation to the Priory. "It is none of my doing, upon my honour," cried he; "my father has written and published the address without my consent, and in spite of my earnest entreaty. I am shocked at his conduct, but, believe me, I will not participate in it. Paulet, I will never oppose you, should my father disinherit me for my refusal."

"My dear Axford," answered Paulet, "there must be no misunderstanding between you and your father; if he insists upon your becoming a candidate, I make it a point of friendship with you that you will not refuse on my account. I think I can speak for you, as well as myself, that this contest can proceed without involving, in the least degree, our private feelings towards each other. If you succeed, I shall heartily congratulate you, and rejoice that the county has chosen so honourable a representative. I would resign to you at once, and support you with all my power, were it merely a matter of personal ambition, but—"

"No explanations, my generous friend," interrupted Axford; "I know that your claims are in every respect infinitely

superior to mine, and nothing shall induce me to prefer my own in opposition to them."

The young man said this with great energy, although evidently at the same time labouring under strong excitement. Lady Jane bestowed warm praises on his noble conduct, and reproached herself for having doubted him. His expectation was, however, chiefly interested in the opinion of Miss Paulet. She, like her brother, strongly urged him not to offend his father, and if he persisted in desiring that he should become a candidate, to comply without hesitation.

"St. Leger has already told you," said she, "that there is no possibility of your conduct being misinterpreted here; we all understand and fully enter into your situation; and be assured," she added, "if that is of any importance, that the good opinion of all here will be best preserved by your acquiescence in your father's will."

"Your will," cried he eagerly, "is a law to me." At which words Lady Jane and her husband exchanged looks, and Alice suddenly turned pale, but with her usual presence of mind and discretion, she immediately treated this expression of unguarded passion (for such it undoubtedly was,) as a mere compliment. "But I would not have you consider this as a matter of gallantry," said she with a smile, "because it is one of duty and affection."

The young man promised filial obedience, and casting a look of deep and melancholy significance at Miss Paulet, took his leave. So selfish does love make one, that I derived great gratification from this incident, inasmuch as it strengthened my belief that Captain Axford was suffering a hopeless passion.

He was spared, however, this contest between parental authority and private feeling, for Mr. Axford, either persuaded by his son, or having ascertained, perhaps, that his success would be doubtful, and reflecting that it might not be altogether politic to break with his friends at the Priory, decided upon making a virtue of expediency, and accordingly intimated to Mr. Paulet that, as he was inflexible in his purpose, his son's claims should be immediately withdrawn, as he could not think of being party to any act, the tendency of which should be to interrupt the good understanding which had always subsisted, and he trusted would ever continue, between his own family and that of Mr. Paulet. He ended a somewhat inflated epistle with a proffer of support, which was shortly after repeated in person, and of course willingly accepted.

This preliminary being happily settled, preparations were made for the approaching contest, into which a third candidate had now entered. This was a person, who, though without any chance of success, was an antagonist much to be deprecated; this person was one of those low speculators in politics, who with no principle, and a very moderate share of talent, and actuated by the most abandoned motives of personal aggrandizement, adopt the only as well as the easiest mode which offers itself to them of becoming notorious, namely, addressing themselves to the very lowest order of the community. The qualifications requisite for practising upon this class may be associated with the meanest capacity, and must necessarily belong to the coarsest mind, inasmuch as no person with the feelings of a gentleman would condescend to such dirty work. Impudence, profligacy, vulgarity, and fluency, seem to be the essential requisites for a *man of the mob*, (a *man of the people*, in the legitimate sense, is a far different character,) and a plentiful abuse of every superior class, and of every public office and officer, the inculcation of every principle and measure having a levelling tendency, and a seasoning of claptraps, are the principal ingredients of the eloquence adapted to that august assembly. Mr. Sims, the present candidate for the county, in opposition to Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Paulet, was the most conspicuous of those vagabond demagogues who go about seeking their fortune in every place where the mob is powerful; and unfortunately such was the case in Mr. Paulet's county. Sims, though he had grown grey in his calling of "agitation," had not yet been enabled to pollute the House of Commons with his presence, but he now offered himself as a candidate under peculiar advantages, for having lately stirred up the rabble of one of the manufacturing districts to a mischievous riot, he had succeeded in attracting the notice of Government, which prosecuted him, and he was so fortunate as to incur a severe sentence. On these circumstances his extraordinary chance of success on the present occasion was grounded; though, indeed, had the adventure been utterly hopeless, the pleasure of insulting and annoying a member of the government and a gentleman, would have been a strong temptation, especially as he always managed these matters without a shilling of cost, or if he did incur any expense, he indemnified himself from the scanty pockets of his wretched partisans.

CHAPTER VIII.

So far, however, was the loathsomeness of coming in contact with such a fellow, from deterring Mr. Paulet, it was an additional incentive to persevere, for he said he should consider it an act of political cowardice, to be withheld by a personal disgust of an antagonist from encountering him. He proceeded in his canvass, therefore, with great assiduity, and received from the most respectable quarters every support and encouragement. I accompanied him in all his visits: there was no alteration of manner to suit his present situation and purposes; he showed the same courtesy to every freeholder that was natural to him, but there was no extraordinary blandness in his smile, nor humility in his bow. He requested the elector for his vote, but was never urgent if he hesitated or declined, though he answered the questions which were put to him, relative to his political opinions, with promptitude and perspicuity. This uncompromising loftiness of behaviour lost him, perhaps, some votes, but, upon the whole, I think it caused his character to be esteemed and respected; for, as an honest farmer observed to me, "I likes Mr. Paulet, because he's straight-forrard, and got no nonsense about him. Whenever I see a gentleman full of bows and smiles, I keeps a sharp look-out after him; for your rogues is always uncommon civil." I was much pleased by the sentiment expressed by another freeholder upon whom we called. He was a plain, sensible, worthy English farmer—a breed which I fear is now upon the decrease.

"Mr. Eccles," said Paulet, "may I expect to be favoured with your vote at the ensuing election. My principles—"

"That you shall, Mr. Paulet," was his reply; "and not only that, but I shall bring all my people to the poll at my own charge to vote for you. You'll excuse my interrupting you, Sir, but I don't want to hear what your principles are; I know that you are a gentleman of undoubted integrity, and that's the main, to my thinking. There isn't much honesty going now, in public men, and therefore when we can get it we should make much of it. I don't ask your opinions on

this or that particular subject—I don't seek to inquire into them, for I know they are honest, and if they are honest they can't be far wrong—that's my notion."

"I thank you for your confidence, my good friend," answered the candidate; "and I am proud of it, for the reason which you have stated; I have nothing, indeed, to offer you beyond good intentions, and that is a qualification to which I believe every candidate lays claim."

"But it is one, Sir, for which everybody who knows you, will give you credit: now I, for one, wouldn't give that Sims credit for it, because, though he boasts of having such a large fund of honesty, I should be afraid that he would turn out, in the end, a bad debt. He came to me but yesterday, and says he; 'Mr. Eccles, I'm sure you'll give me your vote, in preference to the couple of rips who are opposed to me; I am an honest man, determined to do the people's work, in spite of the taxeaters, and rascally aristocratical pickpockets.' 'Mr. Sims,' says I, in answer, 'as you've come to me in the character of a candidate, I shall take the liberty of speaking my mind. I shan't vote for Mr. Armstrong, because I think his late conduct proves him not to be an upright man; nor shall I vote for you, because I consider that your whole political conduct 'proves you to be either unwise or dishonest, and therefore unfit for a Member of Parliament; for if any man, with an ounce of sense, could seriously be of your opinions, he could hardly believe that the most ignorant class of the people, because they are the most numerous, have a right to an overruling influence in the country. And on the other side, I say, no man with a grain of honesty could profess such opinions, knowing them to be a humbug. Now, Mr. Sims, to be blunt and plain-spoken like yourself, I don't say that you are either knave or fool; but I believe you must be one or the other; and therefore I shan't contribute towards making you a Member of Parliament.' That's what I said to Mr. Sims."

"Very well, indeed, Mr. Eccles," said I; "and what answer did this respectable person make?"

"Oh, he began to be saucy, Sir; so I reminded him that he wasn't talking to any of his *rips* and pickpockets, and that if he didn't keep a civil tongue in his head, I should make bold to show him the door; and I warned him also not to meddle with my labouring men, for if he did, it should be the worse for him: so then he slunk off as sheepish as anything. You've nothing to fear, Mr. Paulet, except abuse

rom him, and a pelting from his mob, which is bad enough, to be sure."

Cockney politicians would be surprised, if they could have personal experience of the very little interest excited in the country by what are styled popular questions. Excepting those substantial topics, which immediately affect their own concerns, I have no hesitation in asserting that the respectability and solid sense of the nation have almost always been indifferent to those speculations which agitate the writing and talking class of the political world. The mob, indeed, utterly void of understanding, adopt the fashion of the day, just as their antipodes comply with the reigning mode, without any regard to its origin, its propriety, or grace. There is, indeed, a beautiful analogy in character, manners, and constitution, between these two extreme classes of the community. Both are profligate, shallow, ignorant, and base-minded; both are vulgar, in the true sense of the word, presumptuous, bullying, and insolent to their superiors; both are, in the same manner, governed by any adventurer, who, without the means of advancing his fortune in a more reputable line, may, with a good share of impudence and address, acquire an ascendancy over these. Finally, there is but one sentiment equally applicable, to both, and that is sovereign contempt. The only difference between the foul and fashionable mob is, that if the former become mischievous, they can be dealt with by force; whereas, the latter, under the broad cloak of folly, a protection always respected by the free spirit of our constitution, are suffered to commit any excesses, whether simply ridiculous, or really injurious.

CHAPTER IX.

THE result of our canvass, hasty and imperfect as it necessarily was, decidedly favoured the probability of my friend's success. The struggle would be between him and Mr. Armstrong, who, if he had lost some old honest friends, by the defalcation from principle, of which he had been guilty, had, in all likelihood, by the attraction of his ministerial character, gained over others, sufficient to indemnify him. Another disadvantage to Mr. Paulet, as far as concerned the lower orders of the constituency, was, his having signified his determination not to spend a shilling in the election for any purpose not sanctioned by the constitution. For legal expenses only he would be responsible; he would pay, if required, the expenses of the elector to and from the poll, and indemnify him for his loss of time; in fact, he would treat him in the same manner as the law would compel him to provide for a witness, whom a litigant had withdrawn from his profession or trade, to give evidence in support of his cause. Mr. Armstrong and his government agents, on the contrary, put into operation every engine of intrigue, tact and corruption. Sims, who made a virtue of necessity, and abstained from bribery, because he had not the wherewithal, endeavoured to counteract, by oratory, Mr. Armstrong's terrible weapon—money, which made sad havoc among his friends, and, in fact, deprived him almost altogether of the flower of his party—those who possessed the elective franchise. He still, however had a great show of rabble, and on the day of nomination, the Sheriff declared, from the exhibition of their dirty hands, which darkened the court-house, that the election had fallen on Mr. Sims. The right honourable Henry Armstrong, and St. Leger Paulet, Esquire, thereupon demanded a poll, which was, of course, conceded accordingly.

The speeches of the candidates were characteristic enough. Mr. Armstrong entered with a long and elaborate "explanation," the real object of which, no doubt, was to mystify, although it professed to demonstrate, that in taking office, he

had been actuated only by the purest views. He assured them that had he consulted his own inclinations, he should have preferred a private station to the anxieties and vexations of office, but that he could not suffer himself to be influenced by such selfish considerations, and that he even thought it incumbent upon him to incur the risk of the greatest misfortune which could happen to him, namely, his conduct being misinterpreted by his constituents, than abstain from placing himself in that situation, in which it was his honest conviction, that he should find the greatest facilities of promoting their interests, and those of the country at large. He affected to feel injured by the doubts of the electors, and reprobated the cruel prejudice that the acceptance of office should be regarded as *prima facie* evidence of a public man's dishonesty.

Mr. Paulet spoke briefly. "He said that his only motive in coming forward upon the present occasion, was to afford those freeholders who thought with him, that the right honourable gentleman's recent conduct had rendered him unworthy of their farther confidence, an opportunity of manifesting their sentiments. He imputed no motives to the right honourable gentleman, but rested his opposition to him upon the simple fact, that he had become a member of an administration which, in his opinion, and if he was rightly informed of the sentiments of the electors, was considered by them unfit to conduct the business of the country. He entirely agreed with the right honourable gentleman, that the acceptance of office was quite consistent with the highest probity; but even if he could be satisfied, (which he must acknowledge he was not, by the speech which he had just heard,) that in taking that step the right honourable gentleman had been guilty only of an error of judgment, the importance of the error would have been a sufficient inducement to him to oppose his reelection."

Here Mr. Armstrong, with great politeness, begged "that Mr. Paulet would be so good as to state whether the imputation implied by the remark that he (Mr. P.) was not satisfied that he (Mr. A.) had committed merely an error of judgment in taking office, was meant to apply to him in his public or private character?"

Mr. Paulet replied. "I regret that the right honourable gentleman should have asked me a question, my reply to which he may possibly consider personally offensive; but I

am bound to say, that I cannot comprehend the distinction which the right honourable gentleman proposes. It seems to me to proceed on the assumption that the public and private man are two distinct individuals, whose respective motives and actions are totally independent of each other. Possibly this distinction may exist in practice, but I cannot consent to the principle. Personal honour and public integrity are, in my opinion, essentially the same thing."

"Then," rejoined Mr. Armstrong, with unruffled politeness, "I am to understand that the honourable gentleman neither explains nor retracts any part of his insinuation or opinion as far as regards myself and my conduct?"

Mr. Paulet. "I spoke advisedly; I have nothing to retract or explain."

Mr. Armstrong bowed, and immediately spoke to a friend who stood near him. The Man of the Mob then came forward, in his turn, to address the multitude. "My friends," said he, "one of your honourable candidates has taken half my trouble off my hands, for he has proved pretty plainly that your right honourable candidate is no better than he should be. Now it only remains for me to do the same good office by him. In the first place, then, he belongs to the aristocracy, and that perhaps is saying enough for him, without adding a word more. He belongs to that tax-pampered body who think that the people are born merely to labour for their pleasure, and by the sweat of their brow to maintain them in idleness and luxury. How is it possible, I will ask you, that a man belonging to this class, and educated in this spirit, can possibly be a proper representative of the people? He cannot if he would, it isn't in his nature; it is directly contrary to his interest to promote their's. What is your interest? why, to do away with taxes, to be sure, which consume more than half the produce of your labour. And pray what would become of all the lords and honourables if there were no taxes? why they must go to the devil. To be sure, they are not ashamed to beg, but they cannot work. Is it not, then, the greatest folly to expect that they'll do that which must send their sons and brothers, if not themselves, to starve? Why, then, is it not as plain as the nose in the right honourable gentleman's face," (here a shout of laughter, that feature being the most prominent in Mr. Armstrong's phiz,) "that an aristocratical parliament cannot possibly benefit any body but themselves, and that in benefiting themselves, they directly inflict a great

burden and injury upon you? The game then is in your own hands, and if you will madly persist in sending Lords, and the relations of lords, as your representatives to parliament, in preference to honest men, who are able and willing, and have every inducement to support the people's cause, you deserve to be treated as slaves, and to be made sweat for the good of your masters." Vociferous applause.

John Doughty Parker
 Ann Adams
 S. B. Mich

S. B.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT an hour after the business of the day was closed, while Paulet and I were sitting together at his hotel, a Major Dugdale, with whom we were unacquainted, sent in his compliments, and requested the honour of a few minutes conversation with Mr. Paulet. He followed upon the servant's heels, and was ushered into the room accordingly. I guessed in a moment who he was, and what was his business.

"I have waited upon you, Mr. Paulet," said Major Dugdale, who was a person of very gentlemanly address, "by request of Mr. Armstrong, who has been persuaded to hope that you may still be induced to afford him some satisfactory explanation of the language which you applied to him this morning on the hustings, in order to avert the consequences."

"I beg Major Dugdale's pardon," interrupted Paulet, "but a moment's reflection must show him how utterly impossible it is for me to suffer any consideration of personal consequences to affect what I said. It is painful to me to insist upon such a topic, and perhaps, Sir, it will suit you better to discuss the matter with my friend Sir Matthew Sydenham, who is in possession of my sentiments, and I am sure will have the kindness to act in my behalf." So saying, he bowed to Major Dugdale, and left the room.

"I wish this affair could be accommodated, Sir Matthew," said Mr. Armstrong's friend.

"You cannot wish it, Sir, more sincerely than I do; but if your friend is determined to take hostile notice of the expressions used, I see no chance of avoiding a meeting, for Mr. Paulet is inflexible."

"Then I really am afraid there is no chance of an amicable arrangement, for you must be aware, that on the part of my principal, I could not accept anything less than an explanation as public as the offensive expressions."

"Of course you could not, Sir; but that is a proposal which I could not take upon me to offer to my friend."

"Then, Sir Matthew, I'm afraid it only remains for us to settle the preliminaries of a meeting." I bowed in assent, and we proceeded to business. It was decided that the meeting should take place the following morning, at a lonely spot about five miles distant from the town where the election was held.

When I reported the result of our brief conference to Paullet, he manifested some emotion. "Should this affair be fatal to me," said he, "what will become of Jane and Alice! In that event, Sydenham, I rely upon your friendship and discretion, to take care that the news should not reach them suddenly, especially Jane; for an unprepared disclosure might kill her, or turn her brain. My sister has more strength, and would not be so immediately overpowered by the intelligence."

"My dearest friend," said I, "I pray you not to anticipate such a calamity; the affair will, in all probability, end without any serious consequence."

"No, Sydenham," he replied, "I do not by any means suppose that the event to which I allude will be a probable consequence of our meeting; but as it is possible, I should be guilty of culpable neglect in not providing for it."

He then expressed his wishes, and gave his directions how I should act in case of his fall; but his great anxiety was about his wife and sister. I could not help saying I thought it was to be regretted that he had used expressions, which, however morally justifiable, must almost necessarily provoke hostility; and I likewise took the freedom of giving him my opinion, that he might subsequently have afforded some explanation, which would not, in any degree, have compromised his honour, while it would have relieved Armstrong from the necessity of making it a personal matter. He would not, however, admit that he had done wrong. "In fact," said he, "I felt it incumbent upon me to say what I did; and if I were placed in the same situation to-morrow, I could not avoid taking the same course. The very ground upon which I came forward to oppose him, was his having joined a dishonest and incapable administration. He then calls upon me to neutralize what I said by a flimsy evasion, which if any consideration could have induced me to do, I had the strongest motives for avoiding this extremity. Truth, my dearest friend, must be maintained at any sacrifice."

We parted early in the evening, as he wished to be left

alone, to prepare the usual writings in contemplation of a fatal issue to this unfortunate quarrel. I, on my part, had arrangements to make likewise, and with some secrecy, that no obstacle to a meeting might occur on our side; being aware, by the observations which I had heard made on the hustings, that there was an apprehension of hostile intentions, on the parts of the rival candidates, from what had passed between them; and Paulet had been urgent with me to take every precaution to avoid the interposition of the civil power. I sent Pearson for a pair of duelling-pistols, which were at the Lodge; and under the direction of that discreet and trusty servant, I ordered my carriage and a pair of horses to be in waiting at a house about a mile and a half out of the town, on the road to the place of rendezvous, at half-past seven o'clock in the morning, the meeting being appointed for eight.

Although I will not presume to say that my feelings on this occasion were of the same degree of intensity as those which agitated my principal, they were of the same kind, namely, a consideration of the misery in which those dear relatives would be involved, should the event be fatal to a beloved husband and brother. I do not suppose that my noble-minded friend was stoic enough to be utterly regardless of himself; but of this I am sure, that the idea of losing him, and in such a manner, was far more afflicting to me than the contemplation of his own death, as respected himself individually. All his thoughts were engrossed by those dear objects, who were happily then unconscious of his situation. At the same time, I indulged sanguine hopes that, even yet, Major Dugdale and I might be able to settle the affair, if not amicably, at least without having recourse to the duello; notwithstanding I was aware of the uncompromising spirit of Paulet, and I was determined to guard, with scrupulous delicacy, the sacred trust which was confided to me—my friend's honour. When abroad, I had been engaged in three of these affairs, once as a principal, and twice as a second; and on this occasion, for the first time, I felt really nervous.

In the morning, as we were walking to the place where we were to meet the carriage, I asked Paulet whether he had much practice with the pistol, as his antagonist had the reputation of being a crack shot. He answered that he had never fired a duelling-pistol in his life. "As for practising, for the purpose of acquiring the skilful use of the weapon,"

said he, "I really do not understand how any gentleman can reconcile it to his honour and conscience. In my opinion, such a practice properly belongs to the education of a ruffian or an assassin."

I was silent, for I could not agree with him in his severe censure upon that, of which I myself had been guilty; nor, indeed, could I offer anything in defence of the practice, which certainly is inhuman and ungentlemanly, if not cowardly. We reached the ground a few minutes before the other party, who very politely apologized for having kept us waiting. A conference immediately took place between Major Dugdale and myself; he like an honourable and sensible man, very anxious to settle the matter peaceably, and said that he was empowered to receive anything in the shape of apology or explanation which could be at all considered satisfactory. I dared not, however, yield anything of the kind; all that I could say was, that Mr. Paulet considered the expressions which he had used, to belong to his public duty. This, however, amounted to little or nothing; so it was reluctantly decided that they must fight. We proceeded accordingly to measure the ground, and load. The distance was ten paces; the principals took their places; I presented a pistol to Mr. Armstrong, who accepted it with much grace; Mr. Paulet, at the same time, receiving his weapon from Major Dugdale.

It was agreed that they should fire together. The signal was given, and Mr. Armstrong fired, but his antagonist did nothing.

"You have not fired, Mr. Paulet," observed his antagonist.

"No," said he, "I came here to afford you satisfaction, and not to seek it myself."

"You are wounded, Sir!" exclaimed the other, who perceived, at the same moment that we did, the blood flowing over his white trowsers, above the knee. We all ran to his assistance. He leaned upon me for support. "Thank Heaven!" was my first ejaculation, "the wound is in no vital part." The surgeon who was in attendance immediately examined it, and, to my great joy, declared it was a mere trifle; the ball had only glanced upon the skin. Major Dugdale and myself now agreed to refuse sanctioning the affair any farther. Mr. Armstrong, indeed, had no wish for a second fire, and professed himself obliged to Mr. Paulet for the promptitude and candour with which he had afforded him satisfaction. He then bowed and left the field with his

friend. Thus happily ended this disagreeable business. As soon as we returned to the town, Paulet despatched a servant with a note to the Priory, informing the ladies of what had taken place, lest any incorrect or exaggerated report should reach them. He described the affair as bloodless, observing to me it was better to make no mention of the slight scratch which he had received, for their imaginations might work it up into a source of anxiety and alarm.

That duel was what I deemed
 Case a fiasco
 J. D. P.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING the first four days, the government candidate was kept at the head of the poll, but his advantage over Paulet was not considerable. The Man of the Mob, finding that he had no chance by fair means, did not hesitate to try what he could do by foul. He put bludgeons into the hands of his voteless vagabonds, who in great numbers surrounded the hustings, and marked and waylaid every freeholder who came to give his suffrage for either of the other parties. This system of intimidation was not without effect, for though some of the stout yeomen boldly advanced to the poll in defiance of threats and obstacles, many, either less bold, or having a due regard to their personal safety, for the sake of their helpless wives and families, were deterred by the apprehension of violence from exercising their franchise.

The outrages of these villains at length grew so intolerable, that both Armstrong and Paulet presented a requisition to the sheriff, founded on the affidavits of several freeholders, who swore that they were prevented polling by the fear of bodily injury, to call in the aid of the military power, if the civil force was inadequate to preserve order. Accordingly, a troop of lancers, belonging to a regiment which had been quartered in the town, but removed during the election, was sent for. This proceeding was of course furiously clamoured against by Sims and his friends, who very plainly encouraged the mob to resist force by force. The consequence was, that the military upon entering the town were encountered with a storm of missiles, such as mud, broken crockery, stones, and brickbats, which they received with that forbearance unknown to any but a British soldier, because no other nation in the world enjoins such a respect for the license of the subject. It was not until two of the men had been disabled, and three or four severely cut and bruised by the assaults of the mob, that they were permitted to make any movement. They then advanced at a slow trot, driving the rascallions before them by pricking them behind with their lances, to the great amusement of the spectators, who form a considerable item

in mobs, and who laughed heartily at this humane and contemptuous mode of goading the rioters into tranquillity. Exasperated, however, by this ridicule, the mob suddenly turned to bay, and with ferocious yells, made a desperate assault upon the military, who, finding themselves in imminent danger of being overpowered, drew their swords, and charged among the multitude, cutting away right and left, and revenging the insults and injuries to which they had been so long obliged patiently to submit. In this affray, three lives were lost, and several men wounded on the part of the rioters; only one of the soldiers was killed, but many were severely hurt. The scoundrel who had caused all this commotion, and who did not hesitate gladly to purchase a topic of declamation against the powers that be, and the existing order of things at the expense of blood, now foamed, and threatened, and denounced, and published the most false and inflammatory accounts of the affair in the newspapers, which were thereby furnished with two or three leading articles; a precious Godsend at a time of the year when things were dull. The liberal prints called the above detailed fracas a massacre, and were very wrathful and eloquent; while, on the other side, the tory journals produced their own version in refutation of the statements of their whig and radical brethren, so that it yielded very pretty pickings to the gentlemen of the press, who managed it so well, as to make it last for two or three weeks.

The coroner's jury which sat on the bodies of the wretches who fell, returned, as is usual in such cases, a verdict of wilful murder against the sheriff and the officer commanding the troop. However, as nobody appeared to prosecute, the accused were of course set at large.

The radical candidate finding his resources of opposition and vexation exhausted, withdrew his pretensions, but under a flourish of menaces and big words. "He was driven from the contest by military force; he should petition, and his success would be certain, and when scated, he would move, and represent, and denounce, and hold up to indignation, and what not." However, we were glad to get rid of the fellow, who, though he could not affect the ultimate issue of the election, was a serious nuisance during its continuance. The struggle between the two substantial candidates proceeded warmly. Paulet's success would have been not merely certain, but overwhelming, could he have condescended to those practices by which elections are secured, but he kept rigidly

to his determination of refusing to countenance any such sinister arts. By the agents of the other party, these were put in vigorous operation, and the virtue of the majority of the electors, was not proof against the seducing arguments offered by the treasury candidate. Mr. Paulet had, at an early period of the contest, intimated his knowledge, that his opponent was endeavouring to procure his return by unconstitutional means; and farther observed, that immediately upon a single act of bribery having been authenticated to him, he should have retired, and preferred a petition, were he not desirous to afford every incorruptible elector an opportunity of recording his independence, for it was generally understood that by the conduct of the right honourable gentleman and his agents, every man who voted for him was suspected of dishonesty. Under these circumstances, he should deem it incumbent upon himself to keep the poll open to the last hour, and if the consequence of the right honourable gentleman's system should be, as he did not attempt to deny was probable, a numerical superiority, he was provided with abundant evidence to bring the matter before a committee of the House of Commons."

Accordingly, for the last two or three days, Mr. Paulet kept the poll open without any chance of a plurality of votes, and on the eighth day of the contest, Mr. Armstrong was declared duly elected.

Here reader, you have another proof that honesty is *not* the *best* policy; for by spending among the electors half the money which it will cost him to prosecute his claim before the House of Commons, his success would have been immediately secured; whereas, by the upright course of proceeding which he adopted, he incurred an outlay to a large amount, upon a remote and uncertain speculation.

CHAPTER XII.

LADY Jane Paulet did not betray much disappointment at her husband's failure; indeed she had no ambition, and her wishes for his success were only in proportion to those which he manifested, and would have been excited in the same degree for any other object, in the accomplishment of which he was interested. Alice, however, whose views and feelings expanded beyond the circle of private life, desired to see her high-minded brother in a situation where his character might be more largely appreciated. Her sense, which had a masculine energy and soundness, was certainly somewhat gilded by romance; not indeed that spurious, pinchback sentiment which young ladies learn from their intercourse with the circulating library; not the romance of my gracefully unhappy little friend Lady Oliphant; but an element of a higher nature, composed of an innate principle of exalted virtue, and a benevolence which led her to feel a deep interest in the welfare of mankind. This divine sentiment had not been worn away by the knowledge of the world which she had acquired, in the course of a considerable acquaintance with both English and foreign society, but existed in as much freshness after she had passed through this usually debasing ordeal, as it could have done before I had the happiness of being known to her, when it constituted in my eyes one of the highest charms of her character. God forbid that it should ever be stripped of such a beautiful and amiable delusion!

Let me not, however, be led away by this fascinating subject from the matter in hand. I was about to observe, that affection in the present instance, combining with this visionary notion to blind, in some measure, her better judgment, had caused her to fancy, that not only might the talents of her accomplished brother be beneficial to his country, but that his noble character might likewise become a salutary example, in a situation of life where the high qualities which it possessed were supposed to be exceedingly rare. Perhaps, also, in addition to these purer motives, a slight tinge of worldly ambition entered into the earnestness with which she in-

quired of me her brother's chance of ultimate success; but with what pride and pleasure did her eye kindle and her cheek flush, when I told her that St. Leger's defeat at the hustings was solely owing his own uncompromising integrity.

Both ladies, however, were, at first, too much occupied in congratulating him and themselves upon his escape from the pistol of Mr. Armstrong, to think or speak of his subsequent discomfiture by that personage. Both gently reproved him for hazarding his life in such a manner, though I am sure neither could have endured the idea of his name being breathed upon. In fact, it is too much to expect of human nature that any man should have courage enough to refrain from giving or accepting a challenge, when placed in such circumstances that his abstinence or refusal may subject him to the foulest imputation (one perhaps excepted) to which his sex is obnoxious. Submit the practice of duelling to the test of abstract reason, and its absurdity is palpably manifest. Law hath denounced it with capital punishment, and her decree has been abundantly supported by the arguments of the wise and the good. But the manners and prejudices of society have set at nought law, though seconded (as doth not always happen) by religion, morality, and wisdom. And I fear that until we approach a little nearer perfectibility, we must be content to tolerate the duel, however absurd and iniquitous. It represses tyranny, for it places the strong and the weak upon a level. It checks insolence by the fear of chastisement, and as the last remnant of chivalry, it must be considered as the guardian of that habit of humanity and courtesy of behaviour, which it contributed to introduce. These, it may be said, are arguments drawn from expediency, to advocate what is wrong; but this is the age of expediency.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE were two points in Mr. Paulet's contest for the county which offended the important proprietor of Axford Hall. The first was his being defeated by Mr. Armstrong, and the second was the cause of that defeat: having withdrawn the claims of his son, he had given Mr. Paulet all his support, and that was generally considered sufficient to turn the scale of an election. It may be wondered at, perhaps, that a person of Mr. Axford's quality should oppose a government candidate, but under existing circumstances that worthy person would have supported Sims, or the devil himself, in opposition to one connected in any way with the Treasury. Did Mr. Axford then participate in Mr. Paulet's sentiments with regard to the administration? Not so, but the noble Marquis at the head of his Majesty's Government had (so report said) refused an application for a peerage made by Mr. Axford, and had refused it too, somewhat cavalierly. Judge then his rage and disappointment, at finding his revenge baffled, when he had a signal opportunity for executing it, and when it was known that he had moved heaven and earth to overthrow the member of that hateful cabinet, whom he hugged himself in the security of holding completely in his power. And to be baffled too—by what? by silly contemptible scruples about—honesty!!! It was enough to drive a man out of his senses; and truth to say the worthy gentleman, though like the Laird of Dumbiedikes "not given to swearing," could not help rapping out a few preliminary curses before he could express his feelings in more coherent terms.

"Was there ever such a d—d business? He has utterly ruined and disappointed by—by his absurd conduct, all my plans—all my views—don't you understand? Confound him! I once considered Paulet a man of sense, upon the whole, though rather flighty in some of his notions; but now I begin to think him an absolute ninny—hey? Bless my soul! was there ever such a thing heard of as—as to lose an election for the sake of some fantastical notion of honesty,

forsooth! But it's of a piece with the rest of his conduct, don't you see? By the least management in the world (do you observe?), he might have prevented his uncle's marriage, which will in all probability produce an heir to cut him off—hey! I've no patience, upon my soul! Not that it's any concern of mine—I've nothing in the world to do with it, only I can't bear to see a man throw away fortune in such a manner,—you understand me! But I suppose that would have been a breach of honesty too, to prevent a doting old man becoming the victim of a set of designing, low wretches; humph! Well! it's no use to talk or vex oneself about it! as to Paulet you may as well try to convince a stone wall, as to make him listen to reason, when he's got one of those vagaries into his head."

"But," said I, to whom these bitter complaints were made a few days after the election, "you seem to forget that there is still a good chance of success before the Committee."

"Before the Committee! ay, to be sure, to be sure! But why trust to an uncertainty, when you can make sure? besides, I can tell him that it will cost a devilish deal more to prosecute his claims before a Committee, than it would to bribe half the county, do you see? I doubt, after all, whether he'll incur the expense; but if he don't petition I will, that I'm determined (do you understand?) though it should cost half my fortune."

A few minutes after, he observed, "I do believe, do you know, that that sister of his puts him up to a great deal of this humbug: She's a deuced deal too steady and sanctified to please me; I don't like your demure ones; they never turn out well in the end."

I was amused at this censure upon Miss Paulet, whom he had lauded to the skies a week or two before. But things had changed since then; a certain event had sadly clouded the vision of Lady Alice, which had previously been so vividly present to his imagination. From glimpses which I could occasionally catch of his state of mind upon this subject I judged that he was in a curious state of incertitude, seemingly desirous not to commit himself either one way or the other, with respect to the Paulet family, until he saw what the year would bring forth. In plain words, he was anxious to ascertain whether this unlucky marriage of Lord Truro's promised to destroy Mr. Paulet's chance of being his uncle's heir.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER the specimen which I have given of the worthy vicar in a former chapter, the reader perhaps will be surprised that I should have cultivated the society of that good man. But after the sophisticated people to whom I had been accustomed, I found something refreshing (to borrow a term from the Cockney writers) in a man honest, sincere, and innocent, although his manners were unpolished, and his conversation trite. In town, with the habits and feelings which are there assumed, I should certainly have found him intolerable; but in the country, where one is totally another man, I could find pleasure in a frequent intercourse with him. I will not be positive, however, that one of his most agreeable qualities was not the relish with which he dilated upon the theme then most interesting to me, namely the Paulet family. He had experienced much kindness and attention from them, and the excellent soul was eager to take advantage of a willing auditor to pour forth his sentiments of gratitude and affection. He often declared that this family possessed among them all the perfections of humanity. Mr. Burgess was certainly not a person of high imagination, indeed his ideas of virtue and amiability were of a practical and homely description, and therefore, perhaps, it is not much to say, that his *beau idéal* of womankind was realized in Alice Paulet. Unacquainted with the brilliant *belles* who flourished in what is called the world, he considered it not only impossible that this charming young lady could be exceeded in outward attractions and graces, but he doubted whether they were equalled, and if so, he was sure in a very few instances; but though he had a very favourable opinion of human nature, he would not believe that, take her all in all, his heroine's match was to be found in the wide world.

Next to the Paulets, in dilating upon whom he found abundant sympathy upon my part, the next theme in which he constantly indulged, though without the same encouragement from me, was that cub of a son who made such an unfavourable impression upon me at first sight,—an impression, which was not removed, but confirmed by farther acquaint-

ance. He was a forward, vulgar lad, with no sterling talent, and much sharpness and cunning. Nature, I am sure, had calculated him for an attorney, or a pickpocket; in either of which professions he would have arrived at eminence, had he received the suitable education. I really regretted to see his good father's heart so much set upon a youth, who, I prognosticated, would disappoint even his most moderate expectations. I attempted to alienate him from this prejudice, but I found that it was too deeply seated, and in endeavouring to reach it, I only caused irritation. As the time drew near when his son was to leave home, to enter upon his studies in London, the anxiety of the good man grew so engrossing, that as he said himself, God forgive him, he could think of nothing else, his very pastoral duties were neglected, and his mind wandered even in the pulpit! He would fain have accompanied his boy to establish him in his new quarters, but his absence would have been inconsistent with his professional calls, and he was too good a man to suffer any private consideration to interfere with these.

Burgess, though he had strong confidence in the moral as well as the mental qualities of his hopeful, was, like all good people living in the country, possessed with certain undefinable and hideous notions of the temptations to which human frailty is exposed in the metropolis, and his great care was, that the virtue of Tom should be preserved immaculate amidst these pollutions. When conversing with him in my presence upon his future prospects, and the change of life upon which he was shortly to enter, he always insisted upon this topic, and in order to render his latest inculcations more emphatic, he had requested that I would dine with him on the day previous to his son's departure, and be a witness to the lecture which he should read him upon that occasion.

"Come here, Tom," said the good vicar after the cloth was removed; and he spoke with emotion and in an impressive tone, which commanded even my respectful attention, while the youth who knew what was coming, obeyed with a submissive "Yes, father," and a countenance regulated to a demure expression suitable to the warnings, counsels, and injunctions, which he was about to receive.

"My son," said Burgess, "you are now arrived at man's estate, and are about to be thrown upon your own resources. Your youth and inexperience are to be cast into, as I may call it, the wickedest part of a wicked world, where sin and iniquity is cultivated as a science in all its branches, and has regular professors and disciples. Had I not the highest con-

fidence in your forbearance and strength of mind as well as your education, for you have been nurtured in the fear and admonition of a Supreme Being, I should tremble for your safety. But though I have no doubt of the force and purity of your principles, my fears arise from this very source, lest your simplicity and innocence should be the cause of your being betrayed. Beware, my dear child, of temptation; keep to your studies, that will be the best security, but at the same time do not injure your health by too much application; use relaxation, but let it be of an irreproachable kind. When you are walking in the street, if you are addressed by light women, pass on and take no notice, and whenever you find one of them importunate, for they are so lost to all shame that they sometimes lay hold of men as if they would make them commit sin by force, say to her, 'Unfortunate woman, let me alone, you excite no other feeling in my breast but pity!'

"Be economical, my boy, in consideration of my limited means, and do not yield to the allurements of pleasure, which would lead you into idleness and expense. Providence has endowed you with great talents, therefore cultivate them to the best advantage, and if you at first suffer privations and hardships in the prosecution of your professional career, let the recollection that the greatest men have had the humblest beginnings, serve as an encouragement to your perseverance.

"Take care of your health, for that is an essential point. Wear thick shoes when you walk out in wet weather, for damp feet affect the head and eyes, which are very precious to you. Never neglect attendance upon public worship, except in case of sickness, which God avert; and on no account omit to commend yourself night and morning to Him, who heareth the young ravens when they call upon him."

Young Burgess listened with profound attention and an unvarying countenance, to his father's admonitions, of which the above is all that I can recollect, although they comprised various particulars which my memory could not retain. He promised implicit obedience to, and a careful recollection of them, but there was no indication of real feeling, which, had it existed, must have been touched by the affectionate anxiety of his parent. I myself added a few hints which were received with the same respect, though in all probability they passed, according to the vulgar phrase, in at one ear, and out at the other. I cordially wished the lad success, however, for his father's sake, although I could not expect that my hopes would be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XV.

ALTHOUGH I have not mentioned them lately, I saw a good deal of the Cheseldens. Mr. Paulet's visits to his friend's cottage were indeed less frequent than they had been, for he had fancied that his appearance, unaccompanied by the female members of his family, was distressing and irritating to Mrs. Cheselden. Her husband appreciated his friend's delicacy, and was grateful for it; the same objection, however, did not apply to me, and I yielded to my inclination to cultivate the society of a man so gifted and agreeable as Cheselden, and I really felt much interested in his fate. But he was evidently, poor fellow, not long for this world; he was sinking under chagrin and misfortune; the hopes and prospects which his talents had justified him in entertaining, were now irretrievably lost; the *ignis fatuus* of worldly admiration which had led him astray from his legitimate path into ruin, now no longer courted his pursuit; and even if he could have so contracted his views, as to be content with humble domestic happiness, that last resort was denied him; for as I have before observed, instead of finding in his unfortunate partner one, who would, by her conduct, evince a never-failing sense of the sacrifice which he had made for her, the whole tenor of her bearing and manner was a constant reproach and regret for the loss of wealth, society, reputation, and all the other *agrémens* which she had forfeited by her *imprudence*. At the same time that she manifested this selfish state of feeling, she exacted from her heart broken husband, with vexatious tyranny, the most minute and implicit devotion to herself, and though affording him no proofs of affection, she was always accusing him of indifference to herself, and even quarrelling with his manner of complying with her caprices, as evincing contempt, or duty rather than inclination. This petulance and weakness were frequently displayed when Paulet and myself were present. What must the curtain lectures have been!

Cheselden, however endured it all with heroic constancy. He obeyed his wife's will with patient resignation, and only

remonstrated with her suspicions in the humblest, mildest and most deprecating terms. That he could have retained a particle of regard for a person so weak and altogether unamiable, was scarcely possible, but he seldom even mentioned her name, far less uttered a word of complaint against her to Paulet or me. Had she fallen into the hands of one of those selfish, cold-blooded scoundrels who may be called professional libertines, he would not have hesitated

"To whistle her off, and let her down the wind,
A prey to fortune,"

even had she possessed all the attractions, in which she was deficient. But such villany could gain no admission to the thoughts of the generous and high-minded Cheselden. Whatever might have been his private opinion, he felt bound in practice to consider himself as the seducer of a woman who had sacrificed everything for him, and consequently had a right to expect devoted care and attention from him.

Whether his old and tried friend Paulet was the confidant of his sorrows and disappointments, I cannot take upon me to say, but though we became considerable friends, Cheselden never spoke to me upon a personal topic, nor of course did I, as he afforded me no opportunity of doing so, ever presume to make any allusion of that nature which might be considered impertinent and intrusive. His conversation, indeed, generally turned upon abstract subjects, and manifested a highly endowed and well-stored mind, adorned by that elegance and good taste which arises from natural refinement and knowledge of the world. In the society of Paulet and myself, he seemed to enjoy a relaxation from thought and the misery of his actual condition. We were, therefore, anxious to afford him as much of it as possible, and it was at my cottage that we generally met. But even of this consolation he was, at length, in a great measure, deprived, by the tormenting caprice of his wife, who felt aggrieved by the predilection which he manifested for the society of his friends. This was a trial of temper, surely, but so much was his spirit broken, and so entirely did he act upon the principle of devotion to her whom he had injured, that he submitted even to the last act of selfishness and tyranny. And if he suffered a syllable expressive of impatience to escape him, he immediately excused it by attributing her conduct to affection, which he be-

lied, or professed to believe, was the motive of all her jealousies and whims.

As Paulet and I were really deeply interested in him, we frequently deplored Cheselden's situation, and debated whether he might not yet be extricated from it, and saved.

"The great obstacle to any effort in his behalf," said Paulet, "is his wife; and how to dispose of it, I know not. It is impossible to detach him from her, for it is a proposal which he would never listen to, even if we could reconcile ourselves to make it."

I expressed my fear that it was too late, that his health and spirits were irretrievably gone. "I am not so despondent," answered my friend; "his malady originates solely in the mind, and could we apply a remedy there, I should hope to see a rapid recovery. He is abandoned, you see, to despair, but could he be convinced that there was still a hope open to him, it would be a great point gained."

"But how to convince him? what grounds are there for hope?"

"It was only very lately that any occurred to me," replied Mr. Paulet, "in fact it was but yesterday that I had a letter from my uncle Truro, (who, as you are probably aware, possesses a control over several boroughs,) informing me that one of his seats was about to be vacated by the retirement of the member, and offering it to me in case my appeal to the House with respect to the county, should be unsuccessful. Now, as I have never been ambitious for a seat in Parliament, which, as you know, was not my motive for standing the county, I shall request my uncle instead of myself, to allow me to recommend Cheselden for his nomination. What do you say to that plan, Sydenham? I think with his views and feelings it will inspire new life into our friend."

"If anything can restore him, that will," answered I: "shall we not hasten to communicate it to poor Cheselden?"

"We had better wait until I get my uncle's answer; not that I doubt his consent, but we must not hazard the possibility of a disappointment, which would make him worse than ever."

Accordingly Paulet wrote to his uncle to the effect stated, and by return of post, received the following satisfactory reply.

MY DEAR ST. LEGER,—“I shall be happy to oblige you by returning your friend; Laforest will take the Chiltern Hun-

dreds immediately. Your friend will incur no expense, and he need not attend, if he does not like. The agent will manage the business.

Your's affectionately,
TRURO.

"P. S. I presume Mr. —— (I can't make out the name) will vote against ministers. He must forward his name, &c. correctly to the agent."

It was agreed that I should go and bring Cheselden to dine at the Lodge, in order that we might inform him of what had been done, and talk over the new prospect which his friend's kindness had opened to him. With much alacrity I set forth upon this mission. I found him at home, and his eternal wife, whom I heartily wished away at the present moment, but unfortunately the poor woman seemed to fancy that she was the attraction which brought me so frequently to the cottage, and to my annoyance endeavoured to make herself exceedingly agreeable to me. She seemed recently, however, to have discovered, that her husband, and not herself, was the object of my regard; and I believe this was the reason why she objected to his being so much with me and Paulet.

When I explained, therefore, the object of my visit, by inviting Cheselden to accompany me home to dinner, his countenance showed how glad he would be to assent, which he did not venture to do, until he had consulted that of his wife, who bridled a little, but said nothing.

"I should be very happy," answered Cheselden, hesitatingly, "but I don't like to leave you, my love."

"Oh, pray Mr. Cheselden," replied his love, with some warmth, "don't let me be the least restraint upon you; accept Sir Matthew's invitation by all means; I wouldn't for the world you should consider yourself bound to my dull society whenever anything pleasanter offers."

"No, my dear Henrietta, I can't think of leaving you—"

"Mr. Cheselden, I insist upon your accepting Sir Matthew's invitation," interrupted the lady with increased heat, "I shall be *miserable* if you don't go."

The poor man, knowing perhaps that a week's ill humour would be the punishment of his obedience to this mandate, now turned quietly to me, and excused himself from complying with my request, and his own evident inclination. I could hardly suppress my anger and disgust at the woman's

selfish captiousness. I doubted even whether I might say that I wished to have a few minutes private conversation with him, lest that should be turned into a new topic of jealousy. Nothing but the consideration that my poor friend would ultimately be the sufferer by it, restrained me from uttering something severe which I had upon my tongue's end. On the contrary, therefore, for his sake I endeavoured to propitiate her by extraordinary civility and attention, and when after a lengthened visit, I rose to take leave, I gave a private signal to Cheselden, who consequently accompanied me to the door.

"You see I can't go to you," said he; "it is impossible to leave her alone at present; she is nervous and irritable."

"We must hope for better times, my dear fellow," answered I.

"I hope that she will see better times, poor thing," returned Cheselden, "but as for me, Sydenham!"

"And why not for yourself? why should you be so despondent? I hope and believe that better days and better prospects are in store for you."

Cheselden pressed my hand and shook his head.

"You are kind to say so," replied he, with a mournful smile; "but my prospects in this world are at an end."

"I shall not encourage you in such sentimentalities, which are positively inexcusable in a man at your time of life, and possessed of such endowments. Why don't you arouse yourself, return to the world, and make your entrance into public life. You should be in parliament?"

"I once looked that way, but dare not cast another glance in that direction. So pray don't mention it, Sydenham; it only affords me pain to no purpose."

"What if a seat were offered you?"

"Why propose an hypothesis founded upon an impossibility? Who in the wide world would offer me a seat *now*?"

"Perhaps," answered I, "such a person might be found."

I then, without farther preliminary, apprized him of the step which Paulet had taken, and that his own acquiescence was only required, to place him in the House of Commons in the course of a few days.

He listened to me earnestly, and with deep emotion. He could not speak for a few seconds, so much was he overcome with surprise, gratitude, and delight. At length the tears stood in his eyes: he sat down upon a bench to recover himself.

"I am so overwhelmed," said he, "that I know not what

feeling to express first;" and the tears rolled rapidly down his cheeks as he spoke—"Generous and noble Paulet! had I taken his friendly counsel long ago, what might I not have been now! I can't bear to think—yet even now—but I fear—I fear it is too late—I am gone—I can't last much longer."

"Come," said I, "cheer up; you'll live to sit upon the Treasury bench yet. Your maiden speech will go far to recover you. We'll make a triumvirate in the House; Paulet you and I; for I hope to join you ere long. Never was such a fine opportunity for you to break ground. The public mind is pregnant with questions of the highest import; and if you exert yourself, you'll scarcely be eclipsed by any talent now in the House. The only man of any note is Deveril, and you'll be so fortunate as to have him for an antagonist. As for Singleton, poor devil, he's on his last legs."

Cheselden heard me with a kindling eye and cheek. "I will make a desperate effort," cried he, grasping my hand; "oh, if I could be spared only a few years, to redeem the time and opportunities that I have lost! But how am I to express my gratitude to Paulet, and to you also, my dear friend?"

"As to Paulet," answered I, "I can answer for him that he will be abundantly compensated hereafter by the reflection that he has assisted in promoting your views. To me you owe nothing, except it be for the will, because I have not the power of substantially serving you. But may I hope, my dear Cheselden, that your experience will enable you henceforth to discriminate your real friends from your mere holiday admirers?"

"I understand you; and believe me that I have suffered too much from my vanity and folly, ever again to be deluded. Sydenham, if you knew all the misery it has entailed upon me, you would see how impossible it was, that I should ever be so weak and infatuated as to yield to the allurements of a selfish and frivolous world, by which I have lost everything, and gained nothing. It is not merely the embarrassment of my circumstances, and the wretchedness of my domestic life (for why should I hesitate to acknowledge that which you must long since have seen,) these are, perhaps the least evils of which I have to complain, for they are no more than the just punishment of one act of criminality; but the remorse arising from the reflection of mispent time, neglected opportunities, and talents misapplied,—for I consider all which I fancy I might have gained, al-

though I have never yet accomplished one of my higher hopes—as clear loss. It is these reflections which are killing me.

“But,” he resumed, after a pause, in a more exhilarated tone, “this day is, please God, the commencement of a new existence. I think I have felt a little stronger latterly, and if my mind could be relieved of all its burdens, I know—at least I hope, that I should at length recover my health. The intelligence, of which you have been the bearer, seems, already to have wrought a change in my whole constitution. Independently of its being the accomplishment of the dearest object of my ambition, this act of Paulet fills me with the most lively pleasure, because it is a manifestation of the most exalted friendship. Not indeed that I required this proof after the many which I have received from him,—it is rather the crowning-point of all the kindnesses which he has bestowed upon me. But my feelings have been so deadened by repeated instances of heartlessness, selfishness, and disappointment, which I have met with, that the assurance of possessing one sincere friend, is positively delightful to me.”

He then, with the confidence and openness inspired by the occasion, detailed to me numerous instances of Paulet's liberality and delicate consideration, of which I was before ignorant. He dwelt upon them with real zest, for though nothing can be more galling to a generous spirit, than to be placed under an obligation by meanness, it is purely delightful to be beholden to one of its own calibre. Charity is, in my own opinion, then only indeed twice blessed, when the giver and the receiver are equally elevated above the selfish and sordid feelings of vulgar humanity.

CHAPTER XVI.

To return to the subject nearest my thoughts and heart. I had now been nearly three months on the most intimate footing with the Paulets, and could not doubt that I was already ranked among the foremost of their friends. Never had the better feelings of my own nature been so strongly developed, and I neither expected nor desired to meet with any persons hereafter who should inspire me with deeper sentiments of regard and admiration than I experienced towards this delightful family. My intercourse with them had communicated to my mind a corresponding tone of elevation and purity, with which I was previously unacquainted; or, at least, had developed those better qualities of my character which had been discouraged by the style of life I had hitherto led, and the society with which I had been conversant. Was I not then completely happy? Certainly I had every reason to be so; but, as my attachment to Alice arrived at maturity, I began to feel uneasy again. Not that I had any just cause to doubt that she was sensible of a reciprocal feeling; but, as yet, there had been nothing in her conduct which I could consider a decisive demonstration, although I was persuaded that she must have been aware of the state of my affections. I was alarmed, likewise, by symptoms of a relapse of my suspicions with respect to young Axford—those suspicions which had arisen in the earlier stages of our acquaintance, but had been dissipated by her frank and sisterly conduct toward him, now began to revive, as that demeanour assumed its former aspect. She again seemed constrained in his society, and more so than before; and his embarrassment, in like manner, had returned with an increase. Although possessing from natural strength of character, as well as female education, an extraordinary command over her feelings, it could not be concealed from my searching eye, that she was suffering from some mental anxiety, in which it was obvious to infer that this young man was principally concerned. She now never voluntarily mentioned his name; and when casually obliged to advert to him, the topic was evidently distressing. What

could this mean? I had always supposed such indications to belong to love; but how could I reconcile such conflicting testimonies as the circumstances of her conduct towards myself and Axford respectively presented. I became perplexed and nervous, and determined to have the mystery cleared up.

In pursuance of this bold resolution, I was many times on the point of addressing her, but ever was restrained by some doubt or fear. The time had not yet come. Wait for some farther evidence. Suppose she should hear my declaration with surprise—express her grief at having given pain—her hope that this preference might be transient, and offer the regard of a sister! The bare idea of such a possibility made me shudder; for to be refused by a woman (to say nothing of disappointed love) would be a mortification too grievous for the pride of Matthew Sydenham. I would watch my opportunity, therefore, and, as young Axford was to rejoin his regiment in a few days, I thought it probable that his departure would throw some light on the mystery. Meantime, I set a watch upon my conduct, not to commit myself by word or look, in order, that if I found Axford to be the favoured individual, I might make a dignified retreat.

Matters were in this state when an incident occurred, slight enough, perhaps, in itself, but, under the circumstances, very important in my eyes; for, if trifles light as air are to the jealous man strong confirmations, they are surely equally so to the lover. I was driving Miss Paulet one day in a phaeton, drawn by a pair of young thoroughbreds, when the animals took fright at an object in the road, and started off at a rate which no human arm or skill could control. I never knew terror and anxiety before that moment; the idea of the peril to which she who sat by my side was exposed, (for it will be easily believed, that the recollection of my own share in the danger, did not once cross my mind, until we were safe,) almost overcame that presence of mind which it should have inspired. As I rose from my seat to obtain a better command over the horses, I enjoined her, in the name of God, to sit still; but she neither screamed nor stirred, but with a face pale as death, riveted her eyes upon me. All that my coachmanship could effect, was to keep the horses in a straight line, and turn them upon a hill at the left of the road, about a mile and a half on, should we reach that distance in safety. At present, they were running over a plain at full speed, and I was instantly in fear of an upset by the bounding of the wheels upon the hard smooth road. By great good



fortune, and, let me add, some dexterity in the driver, we reached and passed the crisis, namely, the turn upon the hill. The danger was then over, for the animals began to flag, and were stopped before they attained the summit. The affair, from first to last, could have occupied scarcely three minutes; but they were the most interesting minutes in my life. Immediately the horses were secured, in the impulse of the moment, I turned to Alice and clasped her hand, she murmured my name, accompanied by an endearing epithet, and fainted: with inexpressible delight I caught her in my arms, and lifted her out of the carriage. Unfortunately, there were no means at hand of restoring her to animation, and the servant could not quit the horses; so that I was obliged to wait until Nature recovered her; a period which I expected with no great impatience, as the reader will believe, considering the beloved and beautiful form which I sustained. Had she not become insensible at that moment, it would have been all over with me; pride, Axford, the presence of the groom, everything were forgotten, except overpowering love, and my heart was upon my lips; but now I had a moment's time for recollection, and, instead of the language of passion, I uttered an involuntary thanksgiving to the Supreme Being that this lovely creature, whom I bore in my arms, was not a mangled corpse. Besides, it occurred to me on consideration, that the tender expression which had escaped her, might have been a mere ebullition of feeling at her deliverance from imminent danger, and certainly not an evidence upon which it would be safe to proceed. How lucky, thought I, that she fainted just in time to save me from making a fool of myself! However, I could not help congratulating myself upon it as a most fortunate accident.

After a few minutes Alice revived, and with her characteristic strength of mind, quickly recollected her scattered faculties. Still she was pale from the fright, and leaned upon me for support. I despatched the servant with the phaeton to my cottage, desiring him to return with post horses. Meantime, Alice supported by me walked toward a cottage about a quarter of a mile on, where we proposed to wait the return of the phaeton. I was of course abundant and sincere in my expressions of remorse and regret at having imperilled her precious safety, and put her in terror, reminding her at the same time that I had frequently driven her out with the same horses, when they were perfectly manageable.

"Oh pray send them away," said she; "promise me that you will never use them again."

"Do not suppose," answered I, "that I require any persuasion to dismiss them from my stable; their fate has been already determined. I never could endure the sight of them after having endangered your precious life."

Alice gave a gentle sigh, but said nothing, and we walked on for some time in silence. I never felt so much in love, and required all my resolution to withhold me from betraying my secret on the spot. And another incident occurred shortly after, which caused me most devoutly to congratulate myself that my fortitude had been proof against this temptation. I cannot even now reflect upon the circumstance which I am about to narrate, without a pang which reminds me of the torture I then suffered.

On the morning after the accident, I rode to the Priory to inquire for Alice. It was generally my custom when I called there, to enter by a gate which led through a shrubbery to the house, a nearer way than going round by the lodge. Having dismounted and left my horse with the groom, I passed through the gate aforesaid. As I let myself in, I observed two figures walking among the trees, about a couple of hundred yards forward. Their backs were toward me, and they seemed to be in earnest conversation. I immediately recognized them as Miss Paulet and Captain Axford. I hesitated to proceed, and involuntarily withdrew aside behind a bush, which would conceal my own person from their observation should they turn back. Presently they stopped, and my eyes were blasted by the sight of Alice weeping, and Axford using passionate gesticulations, the purport of which it was impossible to misunderstand. But more irrefragable proof was afforded me, if this were not sufficient. The gentleman dropped upon his knees, and seized her hand, which she made but a faint effort to withdraw—nay, I saw her press it at the same time that she sobbed violently. This was enough. I moved softly from my hiding-place, re-opened the gate, and passing through, closed it carefully so as to make no noise. My servant was taking the horses round to the stable, and was not fifty yards off, for the scene which I have described I witnessed for scarcely half a minute; I beckoned to him to return, and remounting, rode homeward. A deadly languor overspread my whole frame, insomuch that I could scarcely hold the reins or sit in the saddle. Indignation, despair, and disgust alternately raged within me. A

relapse is worse than the original disorder ; I had been deceived, then, in the only person I really admired, loved, and respected, and in the bitterness of my heart, I execrated all man and womankind, and felt my cheek burn like that of a disgraced person for very shame and remorse at having even been so weak as to put confidence in any human being, and at having become with all my boasted penetration, the victim of a vile coquette. All those little attentions, and kindnesses, and amiabilities of manner, which had won my heart, were studiously assumed for that cold-blooded purpose. What I had taken for unsophisticated and beautiful nature, was then only that highest kind of art which conceals itself. She sought to gratify her vanity by the conquest of a person, who was considered unassailable, and she triumphed in the conviction of success. Gracious heaven ! how was I humiliated ! how could I ever again show my face ? Doubtless she and her pretended artless sister-in-law had laid the scheme, and laughed at me when they were together ! doubtless it was written to that devil Mrs. Trefusis, who told it as an excellent joke ! Any person not so infatuated as myself, must have seen that she was a cold calculating woman, incapable of love ; or if so, her affections as well as her interest were fixed upon that contemptible fellow, Axford, before she saw my face. Every part of her conduct manifested it, but I was brutally blind and wrong-headed.

My pride, my love, and my happiness, were equally lacerated by the horrid disclosure. Reject the dictates of the former, continue to believe her all that I had supposed her to be, except in the state of her affections, was my condition better ? No, for the loss of her would leave a chasm in my life, and darken all the future. Her love was the rock upon which I had anchored my happiness, and it was a rock of sand.

I have set down these emotions not in the order in which they occurred, for they occupied my mind in a chaos ; but they serve to give some idea, although an imperfect one, of my state of feeling. I really cannot, upon the whole, determine whether pride or love was uppermost. Sometimes I considered it my own mistake, and again I criminated Miss Paulet. I deemed it better, however, to act upon the safe side, and in my intercourse with her henceforth to discontinue everything which could by possibility be interpreted into a tender demonstration ; and my *amour propre* was consoled by the hope that it was not even yet too late to draw off with an

undamaged reputation. Of course I should not make the slightest allusion to what I had witnessed, but adopt a system of conduct which, without evincing any violent change, should have for its object to do away any impression that my former bearing might have indicated; in fact, to let her see that, though I thought her a very charming person, I had no idea of anything serious.

CHAPTER XVII.

My pride, though sufficiently powerful to form and enforce these resolutions, could not stifle the gentler passion which, notwithstanding all my reasoning against it, continued, to my grief and shame, as ardent as ever; for whether Miss Paulet had deceived me, or I had deceived myself, it was the same in effect, since it was impossible to deny the fatal truth that her affections were fixed upon another.

The next day, however, believing that I should be sufficiently master of myself to encounter her, without betraying emotion, I called at the Priory. Alice was in the room when I entered; she seemed in low spirits, and received me with her usual kindness, but as I thought, not without embarrassment; well, indeed, might she be embarrassed, contrasting the scene of yesterday with the encouragement which she had afforded me for the last three or four months. Yet she never looked so interesting as when somewhat pensive. There was a struggle at the moment which should take possession of my heart—love, or resentment.

"I hope you have quite recovered from the effects of your fright yesterday—I mean the day before," I added hastily, correcting the involuntary error, though I felt my lip quiver as I did so.

"Oh, thank you, yes, I am not the worse for it," answered she, with confusion, at the same time her cheek crimsoning.

"It was a most providential escape," observed Lady Jane, "what a kind-hearted creature George Axford is! he seemed quite struck with consternation when he heard of the danger to which Alice had been exposed."

"I know not how I should have dared to meet Captain Axford," said I, "had I been in any manner the cause, however innocent, of anything happening to Miss Paulet." I watched her countenance as I made this remark, but it was motionless, and her eyes were fixed upon her work.

"Oh, don't talk of such a thing," cried Lady Jane; "I don't know how you would have faced any of us, and I think

that you would never have forgiven yourself. Indeed I should hate you, if I could suppose the contrary."

"You do me no more than justice," I replied. As I spoke, Mr. Paulet entered the room with an open note in his hand. After speaking to me, he announced that he had just received a note from George Axford, who had been rather suddenly ordered to join his regiment, and had not even time to take his leave at the Priory, before his departure. "I don't understand this sudden order," said Paulet; "he knew nothing about it yesterday, and I've not heard of any disturbance in the neighbourhood where his regiment is quartered."

"His leave of absence is, I should think, expired," said Alice, to whom this intelligence did not seem surprising.

"He would surely have known that, yesterday," observed Lady Jane; "I think there is some explanation wanting to account for this sudden departure; I hope, no disagreement with his father."

"Oh, no, no!" answered Miss Paulet; "he mentioned to me very lately that he might be called away at very short notice."

"Well, I can't think there was any such desperate hurry as to leave him no time to come and bid us good b'ye; I really did not suppose that his services were of such life and death importance."

A sneer was rising to my lips, but a glance at Alice, who really seemed unhappy, repressed it. I felt my resentment suspended in her presence, even though I knew that the dejection which made her look so lovely, was caused by the thought of her absent lover, and the scene of yesterday. I endeavoured to talk with the levity of a man full of wit and free from care, but I was conscious that my conversation was not characterized by its usual ease, so I took my leave, declining Lady Jane's invitation to stay dinner, on a plea that I had a person with me on business; Paulet followed me out to talk about Cheselden, a subject, the interest of which, was now superseded by my own all-engrossing calamity. I listened with almost vacant attention, therefore, to the benevolent schemes which his friend had formed for the redemption and advancement of that unfortunate, but highly gifted person. He had by that morning's post, received a letter, informing him that Cheselden's election for the borough had taken place; and a note had likewise just arrived from the new member full of joy, gratitude and hope, although a return of indisposition had prevented him from visiting his con-



stituents in person. Paulet proposed that I should accompany him to offer our congratulations to our friend ; but I excused myself, for I really was not in spirits to sympathize with the glad emotions which the occasion would inspire, although I sincerely rejoiced at the good fortune of Cheselden. I contented myself, therefore, with writing what I feared that I could not just then personally express, with all the warmth which might be naturally expected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I SHALL not trouble the reader by detailing the various aspects in which I regarded the conduct of Miss Paulet, and the different inferences which I drew from the scene in the shrubbery, accordingly as resentment and disgust, love and hope, alternately occupied my mind. Sometimes, actuated by the first-mentioned feeling, I determined upon quitting the place immediately, and hurrying up to town, forget and revenge my rage, shame, and disappointment, in the pursuits of ambition and pleasure. Again as the softer sentiment predominated, I was impelled to commit myself at once—to make it a neck-or-nothing business—by disclosing to Alice the scene which I had witnessed, confessing the state of my affections, and demanding an explanation of her conduct. In a word, I made and rejected numberless resolutions, and always finally determined that it was more politic to persevere in the course which I had adopted at the commencement, namely, that of endeavouring to counteract the demonstrations of attachment which my conduct had afforded, previous to the astounding discovery which had put me in possession of her secret.

I fear, that in the furtherance of this object, I did not proceed with all that tact and discretion, of which I should probably have been master, had I not been agitated by passion. Now that I review my conduct with coolness, I am sensible that my demonstrations were sometimes glaring, coarse, and exaggerated. Instead of that respectful and tender attention, which I had been accustomed to evince toward Miss Paulet, and which I thought she understood and appreciated, I substituted a style of gallantry, with which a man of the world might treat any common-place pretty woman, with whom he was on terms of familiar acquaintance; and abandoning the intellectual character which had hitherto, in general, impressed our conversation, I adopted that light and frivolous style, in which women are usually addressed by our sex. This sudden and violent change was immediately noticed by Miss Paulet, first with surprise, then with a slight indication

of displeasure, and at length with evident pain and regret. She made no comment, however, and I was delighted to find that my altered behaviour had so sensible an effect. I drove away from my thoughts any suggestions that she might really be grieved by my caprice, and be at a loss to account for it; I would only see in her dejection, disappointed vanity, and the triumph of the harsher passion, which had been aroused on that memorable day, when I saw Axford at her feet, and his hand clasped in her's.

I resumed, likewise, in a great measure, my old style of talking—indulged in sharp satire, and cold, heartless sarcasms, such as I uttered in my worst days of bitterness. This tone seemed very discordant at the Priory. As for Paulet, he obviously did not understand my new manner; for to him I had very rarely spoken in this vein, knowing that he had no sympathy with it; and though it would occasionally discover itself in the society of the ladies, it was in a comparatively temperate degree. Indeed, my frequent intercourse with this family had gone far to moderate my satirical propensities. Lady Jane was the first to remark upon the change in my manner and conversation, which she did with the frankness and *naïveté* of her character.

"You really," she said, "have grown exceedingly ill-tempered of late; and though your wit may have been sharpened in consequence, believe me it has not made you more agreeable."

"You would prefer having me dull and good-natured," answered I; "well, I'll endeavour to please you."

"You were not used to be dull," returned Lady Jane, "and yet I always thought you tolerably good-natured. Why not act by your own maxim, 'Wit and malice should be the condiments, and not the substantial part of conversation!'"

"But we were talking of the world and its affairs generally, my dear Lady Jane, and I was only expressing the result of my own experience. Surely you would not wish me to be a hypocrite, and to speak of people and things otherwise than as I find them?"

"But it is shocking to suppose the world so bad and ridiculous as you represent it. Something, I am sure, has gone wrong with you lately, and put you into ill-humour; confess, is it not so, Sir?"

"No, my dear Lady Jane; believe me I have too much philosophy to be ruffled or surprised by anything which can happen to me. A man who knows as much of the world as

I do, will always be prepared for the worst, and will never feel disappointed if the event should turn out contrary to his wishes, because he is conscious that his wishes are opposed to probability." I believe I uttered these words not in such a calm, firm tone as usual; for Lady Jane looked at me with an expression of concern and inquiry in her countenance.

"I am really sorry," said she, "to hear you talk in this manner; of course I can't presume to dispute or account for your opinions, only I fear they must make you unhappy."

"That, I am afraid, is the necessary consequence, in some measure," I replied.

"But why not endeavour to avert it? you have perhaps been unfortunate in your acquaintances and connections; if you were to meet with better persons, you would be reconciled to poor human nature. I hope," added she, with artless kindness, "you don't include us in the number of hollow and designing friends?"

I was taken unawares by this home-thrust, and I believe absolutely blushed and stammered. I even hesitated to make the expected reply, but my better nature prevailed, and I answered, though in a guarded manner, "I should be ungrateful and cynical indeed, my dear Lady Jane, were I to be insensible or doubtful of the kind and flattering attentions which I have experienced in this house."

In the foregoing conversation, Alice had taken no share. She is silent from consciousness or indifference, thought I; and I left the house as dissatisfied as before. Lady Jane, however, I acquitted of all participation in the hypocrisy and heartlessness, with which her sister-in-law stood charged. I could not be so hard as to suspect such a candid, unsophisticated, generous young creature.

CHAPTER XIX.

I WAS a good deal annoyed by the remarks which Lady Jane had made upon my altered manner and conversation, because they showed me that I had betrayed the very emotions which it was my object to conceal, namely, bitterness and disappointment. I determined for the future, to be more circumspect in what I said and did; but as I had not sufficient confidence in myself in my present state of feeling, I deemed it more expedient to venture less frequently into the society of the Paulets, until the time arrived for moving to town, when I should have larger opportunities of letting them see how capable I was of forgetting Miss Paulet in the attractions and dissipations of the world. "She shall find that she has caught a Tartar," said I, internally; "of that I am resolved."

Meanwhile, in order to divert my mind, and to afford me an excuse for diminishing my visits to the Priory, I devoted myself more sedulously to that occupation which was the ostensible object of my coming to reside in that neighbourhood. Engaged in a pursuit of a gentler and far more interesting description, I had hitherto but rarely made my appearance in the field, and was consequently in no very high repute among the noble votaries of Nimrod. They looked upon me, in fact, with much the same kind of superciliousness, as a militiaman is regarded by a regular. The chase was the business of their lives, and the turf the knowledge, to which they were most familiar. They were prepared, therefore, to criticise with remorseless severity, the pretensions of a man who came among them without these advantages. Such a character as myself, who was reputed a fine gentleman, a wit, and a politician, had but little chance of finding favour in their eyes. On my first appearance in the field, my appointments were scrutinized with an envious and fault-finding eye, which found sufficient material for sarcastic comment in their scrupulous accuracy and dandyism. My red coat, fresh from a first-rate hand, my cap of rich and brilliant velvet, my leather small-clothes fitting like a second

skin to a pair of indifferently well-shaped limbs, and my boots to match, together with an exquisite thoroughbred, made a gallant show indeed to the ladies who came to see us throw off, but was viewed with infinite contempt by the more business-like veterans. I was told that my horse was a pretty thing enough to canter in the park, but would never *live* across a country. I was warned that I might expect some stiff leaps and awkward-sunk fences, but contrary to expectation, I manifested no alarm at the intelligence. When the dogs were laid on, I could perceive a pretty general side glance at my movements. Many "whose wish was father to their thought," predicted a spill, and others observed by way of reproach, that I rode like a dragoon, it being a favourite doctrine with fox-hunters that cavalry do not know how to ride. And it did not seem to diminish their dislike that I acquitted myself tolerably well, for contrary to expectation, I neither rode down the hounds, nor flinched from gate or fence which any other horse in the field encountered. The merit, however, was not given to the rider, but the horse, although he was slandered as a screw before we started. But finding at length, that I knew what I was about, that my horse was in fact first-rate, and that I rode fearlessly, though not madly, they began to pay me some respect, to inquire where I had hunted, what was the state of my stable, and to ask my opinion. They were good sort of fellows, coarse, but sound-hearted, and their ill-will was only skin-deep. They did not like me at first, because I was not one of themselves, and they were annoyed by the gay and unbusiness-like appearance which I made in the field, but, finding that I really could ride, and was a jovial companion, they admitted me, with perfect cordiality, to their society.

A year or two previously, I could have been perhaps more interested and amused by these queer characters, than at the period of which I am at present writing, when I had become almost spoiled for the enjoyment of coarseness and absurdity by the company which I had exclusively kept for some months past. Still, however, notwithstanding my fastidiousness, and the oppression of care which I had never before really experienced, I could not entirely lose my gust for novel exhibitions of character and manners.

The Leslie Hunt, so called from its founder and chief supporter, an old gentleman of large fortune in the neighbourhood, who had done nothing but hunt and drink for nearly half a

century, and was so crippled by falls that he could not move without crutches, was composed chiefly of country gentlemen devoted to the chase. It likewise included some celebrated sporting characters, and was well known among that circle. Some of the stars of the sporting world were, at present, the honoured guests of the Leslie Hunt, and their society was now to be seen in its glory. I was a good deal amused by the first dinner which I attended; in fact it was the first thing of the kind I had ever witnessed. The party was about eighteen or twenty. The *spread* was superb, and the wines were faultless; little was said while the eatables were on the table, but as soon as the cloth was removed, they broke ground. Then conversation abounded; some drew out their books and placed them by their wine glasses; the approaching Derby was earnestly discussed, and large bets were registered. Never have I seen at any of the political dinners which I attended, when the struggles of party were most interesting, a greater degree of anxiety, earnestness, and deliberation, than were manifested by the countenances and gestures of those, who were engaged in speculating upon the fortunes of the turf; there were a knot of old hands at the upper part of the table, some of them really "up to the trick," but others "would-be knowing ones," but evidently dolts, who shook their heads gravely, and talked dogmatically. Among the last mentioned, there was an old fellow who smiled significantly, and only threw out mysterious hints when they were settling who should win the Derby.

"Why, Ridly," said one of the stars, addressing the *soi-disant* "knowing one," aforesaid; "you look as if you were in the secret; are we right or wrong, eh, old boy?"

"Oh, don't you know," said Sir Lionel Hawksley, who was esteemed remarkably long-headed, "don't you know his mare, which is to carry all before her?"

"I can easily believe it," answered the other with a laugh; "if she's one of Ridly's Breeding, she'll win after the Irish fashion. Billy my boy, a thousand to one against the mare; will you take it?"

"You may laugh, gentlemen," returned Billy, speaking slowly and impressively, and not in the least daunted by the contempt which was expressed for his mare: "I've too great a regard for you, John Holliwell, to book your offer; all I say is, if you've backed the Newmarket horse, hedge off, hedge off; for if he wins, I'll-be-damned." So saying he emptied his glass of claret.

"What then, she really is a flyer?" said Sir Lionel, winking to those near him.

"Why no," replied Ridly, "she isn't exactly a flyer, because she hasn't got wings, and she *does* touch the earth."

"How much have you got upon her?" inquired Holliwall.

"About twenty thousand," was the self-satisfied answer.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried several, but Billy was not at all disconcerted by their ridicule.

"Did you ever hear such madness?—he'll be ruined," remarked my next neighbour to me.

"What mare, then, is this?" inquired I, "which he has backed so heavily?"

"Oh, I don't know; some brute, come of a stock which nobody knows anything about, and his rascally trainer has persuaded him that she's to do wonders."

Toward the middle and lower end of the table, where the younger members of the party were most numerous, the main topic was varied with slang, smut, and blasphemy. Opposite me was a reverend gentleman, chaplain to a noble lord present, and who, my neighbour whispered me, was a regular good fellow, and told capital stories. His complexion bore evidence of good cheer, and there was an expression of low humour about his mouth. Whenever he opened his lips, they who were not engaged in conversation attended to him with a smile upon their countenances ready to burst into a *laugh*. His stories were certainly queer enough, though not so extravagantly gross as some which found applause at this table. He abstained likewise from swearing, I should not omit to mention; and did not, by any means, sanction an unrestricted license of conversation, for he would shake his head reprovingly and cast a glance upon his black coat, when anything very naughty was said in his hearing, and once, when a young man of the party blurted out something remarkably blasphemous and obscene, he actually admonished him, saying, "Nay, Bob, that's *going too far*."

The nature of the wit which obtained here, was for the most part such, that I am precluded from gratifying the reader with any specimen of it. The conversation at one time turned upon a young lady of the neighbourhood, who was just coming out, and of whom one gentleman expressed himself so warm an admirer, that he swore he would call his favourite mare after her; the highest compliment, I believe, that a sportsman can pay to a favoured one of the other sex. A delicate attention, assuredly, to have the name of her one

admires, and perhaps loves, profaned by the rude lips of grooms and stable-boys. "Dress Lady Georgiana! Take Lady Georgiana to water! Give Lady Georgiana a feed! Clean Lady Georgiana's bed!" &c.

The bottle circulated rapidly, and in about three hours, its effects were pretty generally visible. Every man of the party, except myself, was in fact considerably *screwed*, to use their own phrase. I preserved my sobriety by never emptying my glass, though the practice was observed and murmured at by these devotees of Bacchus. Our host, Mr. Leslie, drank from a glass, the standing part of which was broken off, so that he was obliged to empty it as soon as it was filled. As long as he could ring a little silver bell, and articulate "claret" to the butler, we continued drinking. The last bottle but two was called for, in faltering accents, "cla-cla-claret." The penultimate bottle was ordered with increasing difficulty, "cla-cla-cla-re-et." At last, he was just able to murmur, and while it was drinking, his head dropped on his breast, and his eyes closed. It was only by a resolute effort that his trembling hand could pour the remainder of the bottle into his glass, which he let fall, as he attempted to raise it to his lips. He then fumbled for his bell, which he could not find, and stammered out "la-la-cla-cla-," but could get no farther. This was a signal for breaking up, and consequently Sir Lionel Hawksley, who was less affected by the liquor than any other of the party, except myself, rose from the table, observing that he thought we had had enough. The rest assented to his remark by following his example; some staggered out to their carriages which were in waiting, and others who were staying in the house, reeled away to bed, "taking both sides of the room along with them," as I once heard the motion of a drunken man described. As for the host, two servants entered, and very methodically carried off his insensible clay. I mounted a horse which I had ordered to be ready at two o'clock, and enjoyed a fine moonlight ride home, about seven miles, with a cool breeze blowing upon my temples which counteracted the effects of my slight debauch, and caused me to rise the following morning, with a stomach and head not materially disordered.

CHAPTER XX.

My attention was for a time withdrawn from the contemplation of my own cares by the sudden and alarming change which had manifested itself in poor Cheselden. His constitution weakened by ill health, and still more by mental anxieties, had not been able to endure the reverse of fortune, which the benevolence of his friend Paullet had brought about. He had been in a continual state of excitement ever since I had informed him of his proposed introduction to Parliament, and he thus repented to him all those prospects of ambition of which he had believed himself to be for ever deprived. A fever was the consequence, and his life was imminently endangered. Deeply concerned as I was at hearing of the state of my friend, for such I had long since considered myself, and was acknowledged by him, I felt an additional pang, for I could not but be aware that his illness was in some measure attributable to my unguarded impudence in communicating to him tidings, when a little reflection must have shown me ought to have been carefully and gradually imparted to him. Paullet's grief and anxiety were intense, for he had a real affection toward Cheselden, and took to himself all the blame for the imprudence which had been committed. We did not pause, however, to settle this point between us: no sooner did Paullet hear of his friend's state, than he drove off himself for the nearest physician, whom he brought back in his carriage to Cheselden's cottage. The physician gave little hope of life, and above all things, enjoined that the patient should be kept in profound tranquillity. Finding, therefore, that Mrs. Cheselden could not command her feelings, he forbade her to approach her husband. The violence of her grief was frantic, and her rage scarcely less extravagant, when denied access to the sick man's chamber. Paullet, on this occasion, behaved with prompt decision and energy. Finding that neither reason nor entreaty could soothe or persuade this weak and selfish woman, he took upon him to act, and had her removed from the house to another habitation, almost by force.

The patient, though he preserved his senses, was reduced so low that he could scarcely speak, nor did either Paulet or myself, though constantly by his bedside, permit him to enter into conversation. Occasionally, in a weak voice, he would express his gratitude for our kindness and attention, and his conviction that he was on his death-bed. Sometimes his mind would wander, and then he would complain bitterly that he had not been permitted to leave the world with disgust and indifference, but had been taught, in the article of death how precious was life! Pursuing this topic, his delirium would increase, and he would fancy himself in the House of Commons, attacking a minister, or a minister himself, until he sank into silence, exhausted by his exertions. This was exceedingly melancholy, and brought to my mind the death-bed of the noble Anstruther. Not, indeed, that I would call Cheselden a spirit of an equal order with the illustrious deceased; but they were both generous and aspiring, and were both brought to ruin by hollow admiration, and heartless friends; for, as to the former, I consider the woman to have been but the proximate cause of his misfortunes.

We were prepared for the worst, and our sad forebodings were realized. Cheselden did not survive the crisis. A few hours before the event he was sensible of the approach of death, and calling Paulet and me to his bedside, took the hand of each between his hot, wiry fingers, and for the last time, earnestly thanked us for our kindness and attention; he then paused, and after a short internal struggle, added,

"There is now only one care that distracts me between earth and heaven. My poor, wronged, and desolate widow; you will not forget her when I am gone, Paulet: whatever her faults may be, she loved me, and I cruelly injured her; you will not allow her to be a memorial of your friend's villany—the only memorial of his existence to be one of censure and disgrace?"

We both, of course, earnestly assured him upon this point: he pressed our hands, and, with a look expressive of gratitude and affection, sunk back again upon the pillow, from which he never again rose.

Paulet and I directed the obsequies of our departed friend. His few and trifling debts we also discharged. It was a great relief to our minds to be convinced by the medical attendants of the deceased, that his constitution had been so much exhausted, as to have rendered it impossible for him to have lived many weeks under any circumstances. Mrs. Chesel-

den was plunged into extravagant grief by her husband's death. This violence, however, soon worked itself out, and she was, after a reasonable time, sufficiently collected to listen to proposals for her future provision, which mark of respect and regard to the memory of our friend, I need hardly say, was promptly, and I hope I may add, liberally adjusted by Paulet and myself. She expressed herself satisfied with the arrangement, and decided upon residing abroad, where, within a brief period, she consoled herself with a foreign spouse, who regarded her former indiscretion with the liberality of the Continent, and to whom the jointure, or pension, which she drew from England, was by no means an object of contempt.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE committee which sat upon Paulet's petition soon terminated their labours, the result of which was, that Mr. Armstrong was declared guilty of bribery, and a new writ was ordered; upon which Paulet immediately addressed the electors. In the kindest manner he pressed me to allow myself to be nominated for the borough vacated by poor Cheselden's death, as his uncle had again placed the seat at his disposal. Not being so scrupulous as my fastidious friend, about the means of getting into Parliament, I should readily have accepted the offer, Lord Truro's political conduct being the same as my own; but under existing circumstances, I did not choose to incur anything like an obligation to the Paulet family; and therefore, with many acknowledgments, I declined acceding to his request. Lady Jane, with her usual warmth and sincerity, had urged me to comply with her husband's wish; and even Alice added a word of persuasion, but I refused, on the ground that I had determined never to sit in Parliament, under control or check of any sort; and that if I disliked representing the opinions of a large number of persons, far more intolerable should I find it to be the organ of the caprice or the interest of a single patron. It was in order to secure a perfect independence of vote and speech, that I had previously preferred a seat purchased by my own money.

I had latterly become anxious to re-enter Parliament immediately, because I hoped in the excitement of politics that the severe disappointment which I had suffered, might be deadened, though I felt it to be one, the effects of which I should never entirely recover. I was eager to come into the House, likewise, in order that I might convince the Paulets, by the active part which I should take in the public business, that very little impression had been made upon my heart by their accomplished sister. Palmer's letters had informed me that there was a growing spirit of opposition to ministers manifest in the House, and that with some exertion and address, it might be organized. He did not, therefore, desist

from urging me to return to public life, and flattered my ambition with the probability, that should success attend the efforts of the hostile party, I should occupy a distinguished station in the new arrangements. Palmer was earnestly interested in getting up a solid opposition; not from any factious motive, but because, like Paulet and myself, he distrusted and despised the existing administration. He expressed much delight when I at length yielded to his repeated instance, and promised, as he had previously undertaken, to manage my return without compromising my independence. He presently discovered a quiet borough which was willing to make me its representative, for a moderate consideration. To the terms proposed I immediately agreed, and the thing was settled in a week; the sitting member *sold out*, the new writ was sent down, and no other candidate appearing, Sir Matthew Sydenham, Bart. was declared duly elected.

The Paulets were to remove to town immediately after Easter, at which time I had proposed likewise leaving the country. I now determined, however, upon taking my departure about a week previously, lest they should suppose that their movements regulated mine. I evinced much satisfaction at the approaching change, and seemed as if my mind was almost wholly engaged by politics. Paulet himself, indeed, though destitute of personal ambition, and incapable of entering into the spirit of faction, was not indifferent to the impending struggle against the present ministers. Alice, though from a principle that politics were not the province of her sex she would never permit herself to express an opinion upon them, except generally, rejoiced that her brother had at length become what she had long wished to see him, a Member of Parliament; and I could have flattered myself some time previously, that my restoration to the same character would have been gratifying to her; but though I was deprived of the stimulus that her interest and approbation supplied, a desire to avenge myself upon her, furnished me with an equally powerful incentive to seek distinction. Lady Jane was the only person, who looked forward, with no satisfaction, to exchanging the country for town. "I acknowledge," said she, "I am selfish enough to regret leaving the dear Priory, because, where we are going, I suppose you and St. Leger will be so occupied with politics, that you will have no time to waste upon us poor silly women. By the by, Sir Matthew, that is, I dare say, the reason why we have seen

so much less of you lately; you wished to prepare us gradually for the entire loss of your society in town?"

"You cannot suppose me so presumptuous, my dear Lady Jane; though I must be flattered by your taking notice that I have not been here of late quite so often as I could wish, which has been owing to other and unavoidable engagements. And if, as you are good enough to anticipate, my public duties in town should curtail my opportunities of being your guest, believe me I shall set down all such acts of self-denial to the account of my patriotism."

"A very fine speech, Sir Matthew, but too courtier-like to please me: I see you are preparing for office, for St. Leger told us yesterday, that it was likely enough you would be a cabinet minister before the end of the year; news which you'll probably not thank me for saying I was sorry to hear. The only minister I ever knew, was Mr. Anstruther; and if it were only for being the death of that noble creature, I should hate politics. Place must have some strange charms to gentlemen, for I cannot comprehend them. What pleasure can there be to compensate for the sacrifice of health and the abandonment of every other pursuit, to be shut up all day in a dark dirty street in Westminster, transacting business; and to sit all night in the House, to be attacked, ridiculed, and tormented, besides being abused and insulted by the horrid newspapers? See here," added she, with a flushed cheek, pointing to a passage in one of the public prints which lay upon the table, and in which an official person was mentioned in the most brutal and blackguard language, "what must be the feelings of a wife, or sister, or friend, at reading such slander as that?"

"The hardships and inconveniences you have named, my love," answered her husband, "are as necessarily incident to politics, as personal dangers are to war; but it would be as pusillanimous for a man to shrink from serving his country in public life for their sake, as it would be for a soldier to abstain from the field for fear of the enemy."

"Well, I only hope you may never be persuaded that it is your duty to take a prominent part in public life; you see I am candid and selfish; but I really have a dread of politics, because, to say the least of them, they spoil men for domestic life."

"I suspect, Jane, you are not very sincere in your selfishness," rejoined Paulet, with a smile; "it is not very probable that your fears will be realized; but should I ever chance to

find myself so circumstanced, that even the humble services which I could render, might be an object to my country, I am sure that you would have no more hesitation than I should, in postponing private feeling to public duty."

At the new election for the county, Mr. Paulet was again put in nomination, and there being no other candidate proposed, he was returned accordingly. So high a sense was entertained of his conduct, that a subscription was set on foot to defray the expenses of his election and petition. The sum was rapidly collected, nor did Paulet decline accepting it; for though far above any pecuniary consideration, he deemed it right, upon principle, that the charge of maintaining the independence of the freeholders, should not fall upon the candidate, inasmuch as it would be in the nature of a tax upon patriotism and honesty.

CHAPTER XXII.

To find myself in the carriage, rolling over the road to London, always afforded me, at least, for the time being, an agreeable excitement; but in my present state of mind, when my hopes of private happiness had been blighted, and retirement subjected me to painful reflection, I felt my spirits peculiarly elated as I approached that great world, where I should have ample opportunities of escaping from the persecutions of thought, and where every temptation of ambition and pleasure would court my indulgence.

"Yes," said I, internally, "I will let her see how little I think about her. She shall understand that my thoughts are occupied by higher objects: I will cultivate ambition, and make the most of those talents with which I am endowed. The House of Commons shall hear my voice; I will turn patriot—I can afford it: I am satisfied with the degree of rank and wealth which I possess, and I shall seek power and place, that I may, when they are offered to me, nobly refuse them! How will her vanity be piqued, when she hears my praises sounded! and how gratifying will it be to me, when I meet her in society, to show by the cordiality and frankness of my manner that I considered her no more than a friend, nor suspected her of having entertained any design of inspiring me with a tenderer sentiment!"

On the day of my arrival in town I dined with the Palmers. These valued friends, who were always the same, in town or country, received me with affectionate warmth, which I returned with peculiar emphasis; regarding them at the time, as my only real and disinterested friends; for the conduct of Alice had contaminated my sentiments with respect to Paulet himself and Lady Jane, although I had no reason to believe that they were parties to the scheme of double-dealing and coquetry, which their sister had practised.

"We have asked nobody to meet you," said Lady Eleanor, "as we wished to have you to ourselves the first day."

"And what have you been doing all the summer and winter, Sydenham?" said her husband; "Eleanor was in a

terrible fright that you were going to marry one of the Havilands."

"Yes, indeed I was," answered Lady Eleanor; "for they are an intriguing, frivolous family; mere people of the world, with whom I should be sorry to see any friend of mine connected. And you—I am sure, were equally alarmed, lest they should convert him to Toryism."

"Why, I did not know but that the bright eyes of the young lady and the seductive offers of Lord Tewkesbury's agents, might be too much for your virtue; I know they were very anxious to get you upon any terms, and having failed in both speculations, they abuse you pretty handsomely."

"That I can easily conceive; but what do they say of me?"

"I'm sure you don't care what they say," observed Lady Eleanor.

"True; and that's the very reason I want to know, for the schoolboy's reason—fun."

"Tell him, Eleanor, what Lady Daventry said of him the other day."

"Oh, somebody was mentioning your name the other day at a dinner where we met, and she only observed in her drawling manner, 'Oh, that very ridiculous person, Sir Matthew Sydenham! what has become of him? I think he was a day or two at Betchingley, in the summer, but I've neither seen nor heard of him since.' Now you must not despise this retaliation, but take the will for the deed, for be assured she would be exceedingly severe upon you, if she could."

"The malice is willing, but the wit is weak."

"Indeed, I must say that you deserve much severer retaliation than Lady Daventry can inflict; I should be a traitress to my sex, if I was not indignant at your treatment of poor Lady Charlotte; jilting her first, and laughing at her afterwards."

"As how, pray?"

"Indeed, it was too bad; the remark which you made upon hearing of her elopement is in everybody's mouth—'Ah, poor girl, she has married her lover, out of pique at being disappointed in me!'"

"I don't recollect—"

"Oh, don't attempt to deny it! your very smile is con-

fession, even if the *mot* did not bear internal evidence of its authorship. No one else could have said such a thing."

"It was little Gaitskell who repeated it to us," said Palmer; "he was with you when it dropped, and treasured it up; and being one of Sheridan's good-natured friends, has retailed it with great industry."

"Well, but now," rejoined Lady Eleanor, "to talk of another, and, an infinitely more agreeable topic: what do you think of the Paulets?"

"A very delightful family. Paulet is a superior person in every respect; Lady Jane a bewitching creature, full of malice, kindness, and innocence; and the sister, a very nice little girl."

"Oh, lame and impotent conclusion!" cried Lady Eleanor; "Alice upon whom I expected your finest panegyric, to be last and least in your praise! And then, what an epithet—nice little girl! Why, if you had ingeniously endeavoured to choose the one which should be least applicable to her, I think you could hardly have been more successful. It gives me the idea of a description of person quite the reverse of Alice Paulet."

"Why, what would you have me say? I really like her very much; she is very pretty and amiable, in short—a very pleasing young person—will that satisfy you?"

"Oh no, there is something wanting yet—still some indescribable deficiency. The picture is cold and tame, unlike the glowing sketches that you are accustomed to throw off."

"Ah, but they were not flattering ones; you see I don't excel in praise, my dear Lady Eleanor. If your heroine had but one fault—a single mole to contrast with her manifold beauties, she would be much more attractive; but, in fact, she is such a dull mass of perfection, that she deadens my genius."

"Come, now, I cannot suffer you to exercise your wit on my Alice—But, jesting apart, is she not a love?"

"She may be so to others," answered I, with a shrug; "but, upon my honour, she is none to me."

"Well, you need not deny it so earnestly," said Lady Eleanor with a significant smile, which I observed with no satisfaction, "but give your malice and fastidiousness full scope, and then tell me whether there is anything to object to her."

"Well, since you give me such liberal indulgence, I will

take advantage of it, and extract a fault even from her virtues. It is admitted, you know, that one can have too much of a good thing, and therefore I will acknowledge to you that your divine Alice is a little too wise to please me."

"Is it possible to please you? If a woman talks nonsense, you call her a fool; and if she ventures upon rational conversation, you stigmatize her as wise! Where is the golden mean, I should like to know? I had thought and hoped that Alice Paulet would have exactly suited your taste."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you; so you wished to see me betrayed?"

"I certainly did hope you might be convinced, though against your will, that there was something amiable and estimable to be found in our sex; and let me tell you, that highly as you may value yourself, it would have been no humiliation to have bowed before the shrine of my divinity, as you call her. I know several who have offered themselves, but have been rejected: Lord Amersham only last year."

"And why didn't she accept him? Heir to a dukedom and boundless wealth, one of the first matches in the country; too much, I should think, for any virtue to resist."

"But she refused him, however, simply because she did not like him personally."

"Oh!"

"You may sneer, but it is the fact; and this is not a solitary instance of her declining such offers for the same reason."

"Perhaps her affections are engaged," said I; "indeed I rather suspect they are; there's a young man in the country, whose father is their near neighbour, to whom she seemed very much attached, and he to her."

"You mean young Axford?" answered Lady Eleanor, "I have reason to believe—indeed I know the contrary; she has a great regard for him, but no love whatever; there may be on *his* side."

"Miss Paulet has told you so?" inquired I anxiously.

"I will give you so much information,—she has. I questioned her upon the subject a short time since, for I had heard that they were very intimate, and she gave me to understand that she never considered him in any other light than as a friend. Indeed, from what I have seen of the young man, I should say that he was not the sort of person to captivate Alice."

I was much pained and disgusted by this intelligence of Lady Eleanor's, which went to confirm my belief that I had been egregiously deceived in Miss Paulet. At the very time that Axford was kneeling at her feet and caressing her hand, she writes, it appears, to her friend, that she regards him with indifference!—So much for your demure and discreet young ladies!

Griffiths & Gates. !!!
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 A A I O O O P P P P

 O C I I I

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE following morning Palmer breakfasted with me by appointment, to talk over political business. As it is not my purpose to weary the gracious reader with a repetition of the topic principally entertained in the second volume of these *Memoirs*, I shall not detail the particulars of the information communicated to me by my friend. It is sufficient to say, that his object was to form a party in opposition to the existing administration on public grounds, not adopting the watch-words of faction and repudiating its ends, but endeavouring by honesty, firmness, and talent, to establish a sympathy in the country. Lord Tewkesbury's Government had professed to combine the elements of all parties, which being mixed in the cauldron of office were to produce, among other remedies, one panacea of such virtue that it was to cure all the ills with which the nation was afflicted. This universal medicine had been prescribed by almost every political quack for a century passed, and though it had destroyed every constitution upon which it had been tried, there will still be knaves to maintain, and fools to believe in its virtue; I need, perhaps, hardly say that this panacea was RADICAL REFORM. As might have been expected from such practitioners, the real maladies under which the poor patient laboured, and which admitted of safe, obvious, and practicable remedies, were neglected. In fact, he was suffering from the constant operation of a drastic purge, which his late physicians had been lessening slowly, but surely; but as this gradual course of treatment had been violently reprobated by his present advisers, he was taught to believe, that by calling them in, he should experience immediate relief. The new men, however, after having superseded their predecessors *on this very ground*, bring forward their anxiously-expected prescription, after much preliminary parade, and behold, instead of being diminished, the aperient ingredients are positively multiplied. "At present," say they, "for reasons best known to ourselves, we do not deem it expedient to diminish your cathartics, but we have taken

such order, that *at some future period* they may be lessened with safety." And this too, immediately after one of them had said, "Thank Heaven! the time is come when physicians can prescribe without apothecaries." Poor Mr. Bull, astonished, disappointed, and indignant, and beginning to suspect that these men were little better than impostors, was going to order them to be kicked out of the house; but their people got about him and persuaded the good man that he should die if he were to discard them; "But wait," said they, "for the grand panacea that will set you upon your legs again," and the poor man being in a very weak state, yielded to their importunities.

But to drop figures, and to speak in sober earnest. Heterogeneous as was the composition of this administration, in which Whigs, Liberals, Moderates, Radicals, and ultra-Tories, the representative of every grade of opinion, sat down cheek by jole at the same board, its acts clearly manifested the predominance of Whig councils. Such arrogance and ignorance, such effrontery and imbecility, were too characteristic of Whigs in office to be mistaken. Their proper province is opposition, where they may be in some measure useful as a drag-chain upon Government; and it is likewise good that they should occasionally come into place for a short time, otherwise if they had no opportunities of practically refuting themselves, and proving their incapacity, the country might, by their clamour, be led to suspect that they were unjustly excluded from power.

Their proceedings in the present instance would have been ludicrous, were not state concerns of too serious consequence to be made a joke of. In performing none of their promises, they were consistent to themselves; in adding to the burdens of the country, however, they exceeded the expectations of those who knew them best, and who thought they would have made *only no alteration whatever*. As a means of getting into office, they had raised the cry of Reform, which they intended, of course, to abandon or evade as soon as it had procured for them what they wanted; but when they found that it had, owing to the concurrence of particular circumstances, acquired a stronger hold upon the public mind than it is usual for such popular topics to possess, and that it was, in fact, the only expedient left to them by which they could retain their places, they employed every means of extending and confirming that clamour, not a sound of which had been heard

six months before. Then they came forward with great parade to execute the irresistible will of the sovereign people, whose sweet voices had been raised but recently in the same manner against a measure of justice, liberality, and wisdom; and a short time previously, almost to a pitch of insurrection, in favour of a convicted strumpet. What a crying shame, said these men, as wise as they were honest, that Old Sarum should have two representatives and Manchester none! How monstrous that money and the nomination of Peers should return Members to Parliament! We will repair this deformity in the Constitution, we will do away with its immorality. It shall be symmetry without, and purity within. True, that the greatest statesmen have been introduced to public life by the nomination borough, but what argument is this to men who profess to be studious only of the exact and graceful proportions of the Constitution? We are shocked, say these sticklers for political morality, that seats should be bought and sold; we cannot suffer this abomination to exist any longer; but, gentlemen, you are still free to give five and ten pound notes to the independent electors. Those are private arrangements of which we take no notice. Surely this reasoning is plagiarized from our ancient friend Dogberry.

But I must not trust myself farther on this topic, since in pursuing it thus far, I have abused my reader's indulgence, and violated my promise. *Quid ad rem?* This may be all very fine, and very wise, but what has it to do with the story? We are dying to know about the loves of Matthew Sydenham and Alice Paulet, and you give us a political pamphlet; this is indeed answering our expectations of bread with a stone. Patience, my fair readers, I beseech you, patience, and you shall be satisfied. I have now, I am thankful to say, advanced into the last stage of my Memoirs, which I humbly trust afford sufficient evidence that their principal care has been to provide for your instruction and amusement. One volume, indeed, of this great work has been for the most part occupied by matters in which you can or ought to feel but little interest; for this self-indulgence, permit me to remind you I have endeavoured to atone, by devoting a whole volume to concerns in which you should find sympathy. Nature and experience, indeed, has not fitted me to record scenes of romantic passion, of delicate embarrassments, and elegant distresses, therefore, I fear that the volume which I have just concluded, may be to your taste dull and cold, and, perhaps,

it is unreasonable to expect that you should take an interest in so flat an affair as the growth of an attachment between a man of the world and a woman of sense. The mind of your humble admirer is of a sober, practical cast, and can give forth nothing with which it is not personally acquainted; unlike those fine writers who can draw from the fertility of their imaginations without any assistance from knowledge or truth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HAVING thus apologized to my fair patronesses, I trust I have obtained their gracious permission, in this concluding part, occasionally to diverge from the legitimate course of my narrative, into such topics as those with which the second volume of my Memoirs was conversant.

Against a government of such materials and character, it was Palmer's object to establish a regular opposition; and it was peculiarly consistent with his independence and high integrity to place himself in conspicuous hostility to the popular voice in defence of the right. Palmer, indeed, had never regularly belonged to the whig corps, although, in common with many other independent men, he had co-operated with them against the Duke of Launceston's administration, under the impression that its object was the curtailment of liberty; a design which he was prepared to meet with as much resistance, as he was now about to offer to one of a different description; being of opinion, that the degree of freedom at present enjoyed, was exactly suitable to the welfare of the people, and the spirit of the Constitution.

"Their present measure," said he, "is but a repetition of the attempt made by Fox's India Bill; they fancy that it will secure to them a permanent tenure of office. They are and must necessarily be supported by every disaffected and disreputable person of all shades in the country; Atheists, Radicals, Democrats, and Adventurers, who hate our existing institutions, and who have everything to gain, and nothing to lose by a change, hail it as a material step toward, if not the actual consummation of, their hopes and wishes. To these add the regular mob, who will always echo back the voices of their demagogues, together with many weak but well-meaning persons, who have been carried away by the clamour, and you have what is called the voice of the country. Read the effusions of the orators at the public meetings, and you may judge of what quality they are. You will find their chief ingredients to be seditious gasconade, abuse of the aristocracy, vulgarity, and folly. For my own

part, if force is the alternative, although I dread civil war as the greatest evil next to anarchy and military despotism, I would prefer taking up arms in defence of the constitution, to surrendering it at discretion."

To the alliance which Palmer proposed, I cordially acceded, and undertook to forward its views to the utmost of my humble ability.

"I hope you are case-hardened, Sydenham," said my friend, "for you must expect to be furiously attacked by the press as soon as you come forward."

"I care not for its bullying. No man respects the periodical press more than I do, or is more sincerely anxious that his public character should meet its approbation: but as for the ruffianly abuse of certain vulgar, profligate prints, I despise it thoroughly. It is the duty of the journals to be the organs of public opinions, and not its directors, which they are now aspiring to be."

After naming to me the several members who had engaged to act with him, we discussed the plan of operations.

These arrangements made, I accompanied Palmer to the House. My return was welcomed in a very flattering manner by my old political associates, many of whom were much *changed* since I saw them last, although it was but nine months since. Those gentlemen who had been my worthy coadjutors when I belonged to the gang, but with whom I had broken, upon their deserting their colours, now that they had been dismissed by their new chief, greeted me with extreme cordiality, expressed their indignation at the deception which had been practised upon them, and, in fact, were furious oppositionists, animated equally by the love of office and the desire of revenge. They were, however, sorely puzzled how to act. As the devil would have it, they were old reformers, and feeling it necessary to keep together some tattered shreds of consistency to hide their nakedness, they knew not how to reconcile their opposition to the vital measure of ministers with their former professions. Another set of men, who, when the danger was far off, had bullied and swaggered about reform, now that the enemy was at hand, and the drums were beating to arms, felt their hearts fail them, and slunk to the rear, to afford them a facility, if possible, of making their retreat altogether. A third troop of cowards and sneaks, though hating the cause in their hearts, were keenly watching the position of the two forces, resolved, if they found the reformers most powerful, to support them,

either from physical fear, or to curry favour with their constituents. Lastly, there were ne neck-or-nothing men, the tribe of worthless and ravenous dandies, whose political existence would be terminated, and their hopes of plunder cut off, by the proposed measure. These are politically on a par with the low adventurers and profligate demagogues, whose hopes are in revolution, for their sphere of action is anarchy, except, indeed, (to give the devil his due,) that the former are not so actively mischievous as the last mentioned might be expected to prove.

My accession to the ranks of those who professed to support the integrity of the constitution, was not considered immaterial by either party. I had a high reputation as a rising man, and I do believe, if principle had not attached me to the opponents of the bill, I should have joined them, were it only to separate myself from "the young talent," a pack of shallow, flippant coxcombs, (with perhaps but one exception,) with whom I had a horror of being identified, and the chief of whom were conspicuous in support of the measure. May I be set down for a blockhead, rather than be confounded with the mob of "clever young men" of the present day, who scribble and spout without depth or compass—slight creatures, who can perform showy feats of agility, but have none of the pith and sinew of the giants of old. The illustrious sage has said that money should not be collected in masses but spread like manure. But it would seem that the reverse applies to talent. Be that as it may, however, it is certain that the solid bars of gold are now beaten into thin leaf.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN the gossip which always attends any measures of importance, the different reports and assertions which are confidently made respecting its fate are amusing enough. "The bill," says one careful calculator in its favour, "will be carried by sixty-five."—"I know," says an oppositionist, with equally scrupulous accuracy, "that it will be thrown out by a majority of forty-two."—"There is to be no division," affirms a third.—"Shall you vote for the bill?" said I to a tory country gentleman. "Why, I suppose I must," answered he; "they'll dissolve if it does not pass, and I can't afford to stand another election just now; besides, they say there'll be an insurrection in the country if it is thrown out."—"It'll never get through the Lords," said one dandy *against*, to another *for* the measure. "I'll bet you six to four —thousands," was the conclusive argument in reply. In fact the bill was a very fertile source of gambling, and it was said that there was as much money upon it as upon the Derby.

In fact, at the time, this topic superseded every other. The spirit of politics forced its way even into drawing-rooms, and usurped the throne of fashion. Young men talked to their partners with much complacency of their prospects in the scramble which was to take place, and ladies spoke with alarm of the times, and the dreadful reform measure.

"Do you really think there will be a revolution?" inquired a very pretty woman of me, as of one from whom she expected authentic information.

"No doubt of it," was my grave reply.

"But are you serious?"

"I am indeed."

"And—and what will be the consequences?" rejoined the fair inquirer, who, having ascertained that there was to be a revolution, now desired to know what a revolution was.

"The consequences," answered I, "are too numerous to be detailed. I can only mention a few, which will be among the earliest. The Opera will certainly be put down by act

of Parliament; the patronesses of Almack's will be dismissed, and their places filled up by tradesmen's wives, so that, instead of waltzing with guardsmen, you will be obliged to content yourself with apprentices, if, indeed, you are so fortunate as to get a subscription. So I advise you to make interest betimes in the proper quarters."

"I am sure, then, I hope the odious bill will be thrown out," said the lady, who, however, knowing my character, was not quite sure that I was not quizzing her.

This reminds me of a conversation which at this period I overheard in the street between two "unwashed artificers," at the door of a house, where a petition in favour of the ministerial measure solicited their signatures.

"I say, Bill, cans't thee write?"

"Ah, to be sure I can," answered Bill.

"Well, come in and write thy name to this here purtition for reform," rejoined his companion.

"Reform! what the h—ll's that?"

"Why doesn't thee know? Reform is that we should be all lords and squires; shouldn't thee like to have thy mississ a lady, and to ride in a carriage, with nothing to do 'but eat and drink like a new one?"

"My eyes! if that's the meaning on't," said Bill, "I'll sign it fast enough,—if I don't, I'm blown!"

Accordingly, in they turned, and scrawled their names on the dirty parchment, which was subsequently presented, with previous notice, as the great London petition, signed by a hundred thousand inhabitants.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DURING the first few days after my return to town, my time and thoughts were so wholly engrossed by politics, that I literally had not leisure to bestow a thought upon my private grievances. I rejoiced at this, for it afforded me hope that by suffering my attention to be interested by other matters, I might eventually recover myself, and think and look upon Miss Paulet with comparative indifference. But this I soon found to be a delusion; the arrival of the Paulets in town quickly recalled those feelings and contemplations which had only been temporarily suspended by absence, and the novel excitement of my political avocations. With these, however, I studiously professed to be wholly occupied. I must not omit to mention, that the reception I met with from these intimate friends, was not exactly such as I could have expected. I cannot say, indeed, that there was any marked alteration in Paulet's manner, though it seemed scarcely so cordial as usual. In that of Lady Jane, however, there was something so cold and repulsive, that it was impossible to avoid taking notice of it: neither did Alice meet me with all the frankness and kindness to which I was accustomed, and which was due to one who might at least claim to be considered as a friend; but her manner was far less discouraging than that of Lady Jane. She did not look well, and seemed to be out of spirits, but upon my making the remark to Lady Jane, she answered abruptly that her sister was perfectly well, and in excellent spirits. "What should ail her, and why should she be out of spirits?" This tone precluded any farther pursuit of the subject, and, indeed, as it ran through her whole conversation, rendered my pretty friend, whose great charm was her liveliness and good humour, so disagreeable, that I curtailed my visit.

I was rather puzzled to account for this change, for, if there was any offence on either side, surely it was I who had cause to find it in their conduct, and not they in mine; but, perhaps, knowing this, they acted upon the principle of the man who, when he was in the wrong, and expected a scolding,

thought it best to be beforehand, by flying into a passion himself; unless, indeed, they were angry with me for having declined to afford Miss Paulet that triumph upon which she had, in all likelihood, certainly calculated. If so, there was abundant satisfaction to be derived from their cold looks and short sentences.

I wish I could have felt, upon the occasion, only that degree of concern which is caused by finding those whom one had been taught to regard as friends in the country, sink into mere cold acquaintances in town. I wish I could have experienced a pure sentiment of gratification at outwitting those who attempted to overreach me; but truth obliges me to acknowledge, that though I endeavoured to entertain these emotions, I did not succeed, for I found that they could not take place in a mind affected like mine. The influence of pride—the only counteraction to the despotism of the other passion—was daily becoming weaker, and I felt myself beginning to regard the deceitful and heartless behaviour of Alice more in sorrow than in anger. Fain would I have attempted to shake the conviction relative to this point with which I had been impressed, but really it was impossible, after the conclusive testimony afforded by the scene in the shrubbery. Her pale cheek and depressed spirits were not for me, but for him who was absent.

To get rid of these reflections I walked down to the House. It was crowded, for the debate was upon the great question. A distinguished advocate for the measure, whose speech had been expected, was upon his legs. From the yelling and shouting which continually burst forth in fits of several seconds' duration, a stranger would imagine he was approaching a den of lunatics, instead of the chamber of the "Collective Wisdom." It was impossible to resist the contagion of the scene, and, forgetting Alice Paulet, I took my seat upon the floor, and added my voice to the cheers, which proceeded from the champions of the constitution.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I soon found that I was still a favoured object by that fickle divinity, Fashion, who is more capricious than Nature herself, although I had never courted her smiles, and was now more indifferent to them than ever. In fact, in my connection with this goddess, I have reversed the usual practice, for I exacted homage from, instead of rendering it to her, and treated her occasionally as Mr. Pitt did George the Third, with insolence and contempt, presuming upon a sense of my own importance.

From no motive of vanity, however, but solely from inclination, I now confined myself to the society of that coterie, known in the first volume of my memoirs, by the designation of "Mrs. Majendie's set," to attendance upon my parliamentary duties, and to political dinners. The circle of public men with whom I constantly associated, was much narrower than that in which I had moved on the preceding year. Sometimes, indeed, I yielded to the entreaties of that excellent fellow Lutwyche, and joined his parties, although he was quite out of my present set. The company of wits was, however, sadly diminished since last year. Singleton, its master spirit, was upon his death-bed, and Lord Robert Lindsay, another shining light, had been removed from this to another world: that is to say, he had been appointed to a colonial government. Political differences had rendered it unpleasant for others of the fraternity to meet at the same board; consequently Dick's sappers were deplorably fallen off. Still this choice spirit was not discouraged, but gallantly kept together the remnant of his band of good fellows, which even now, bereft as they were of their former splendour, were not less than "th' excess of glory obscured."

These devotees of Momus and Bacchus complained, in very complimentary terms, of my defection, to which they kindly attached more importance than I could believe it deserved; for to say the truth, I did not excel in that light ethereal wit which was in request among them. There never was such

a set of laughing philosophers as these men. Midas-like, everything they handled was turned into wit, and the comparison holds on, for the mind was in danger of starvation amid this profusion of wealth; it was all glitter. Though they were for the most part kind hearts, a person who did not know them, from hearing their conversation sometimes, would suppose that they were the most unfeeling creatures breathing. Nothing, however sad or serious, was exempted from their pleasantry. Even the death of Singleton himself, was turned into a subject of jesting, although there was not one of them I am confident, who did not sincerely lament the loss of their old and gifted friend. I myself, whose acquaintance with him was of recent date, and who, as the reader has seen, thought him little better than an accomplished knave, could not help feeling much affected when I heard that such a brilliant light had been snuffed out.

A few days after this event, I was present at a meeting of the Inimitable Livers (for so they called themselves, after a society of the same description, established by Antony and Cleopatra, and celebrated in Plutarch), and the loss which they had sustained was naturally the first topic of conversation.

"Well, poor Singleton is gone at last," said one.

"But his spirit remains with us," observed Lord Wallingford.

"You mean the brandy, I suppose, Wallingford," answered Lutwyche, pointing to a bottle of that liquor, which stood by the great epicure, who, like the deceased, was obliged to use it at meals, to assist his impaired digestion; "that, I fear, is the only spirit that he has left behind him—at least with you."

"Club us all together," said Sir Nathaniel Callaghan, "and we should not be equal to Singleton."

"No," replied another, "we should still be too heavy."

"You are a devilish good-natured fellow, Nat, to lament Singleton, for he always abused you. He used to call you his hone, upon which he sharpened his wit."

"I'm like the ancient fellow, what's his name?" replied the good-humoured baronet, "who said he'd rather be wrong with Plato, than right with any other man; so I'd prefer being abused by Singleton, to being praised by anybody else."

"He used to say of you, 'I know not a duller nor a better-hearted fellow.'"

"Oh, he told all sorts of stories about Nat. I heard him say that he was once with him upon Hampstead hill, trying a telescope which he had purchased. The baronet brought it to bear upon St. Paul's. 'Well, can you see anything?' says Singleton; 'See anything!' answered Nat, 'there never was such a glass; there's a lady and gentleman walking in the ball, and it brings them so near, that I can distinctly hear their conversation.'"

"I remember, likewise," added a third, "he used to tell that he was once present when a man upon some occasion or another, said to Nat, 'Sir Nathaniel, I believe you to be a gentleman of the most honourable principles.' 'Sir,' returned the Baronet, 'I detest flattery.'"

"You are a fortunate man, Callaghan, you will outlive us all; your name will go down to posterity, embalmed in ridicule."

"Well, gentlemen," answered the Baronet, "as I cannot be witty myself, I am too happy to be cause of wit in other men. I am delighted to have it in my power to oblige my good friends, for if I had not lived, many of them, I am persuaded, would never have been accounted wits. Therefore, when I die, I shall have the consolatory reflection, that I have not been useless in my generation."

"Very well, my boy," cried Lutwyche, "a very fair retort; but to return to poor Singleton, (would that he could return to us!) I don't think I ever saw him more splendid than the very last night he supped with me, just before he was taken ill."

"Ah! I remember," said Wallingford, "he got gloriously drunk."

"True," answered Lutwyche, "but I doubt whether you speak from personal recollection, for I'm pretty sure that, contrary to your usual practice, you took precedence that night."

"Very likely," returned the Peer; "it was a pretty equal match between Singleton and me; we were generally the last to quit the field; I liked him for that, among other things, he never flinched from his liquor."

"No, he was a valiant drinker; whenever he opened a bottle, even though single-handed, he would fling away the cork like a bold soldier, who, when he draws his sword, throws down the scabbard, determined to fight as long as he can."

"Well, here's his health; Heaven help me! his memory,

I mean," said Dick; "and if he's gone to the devil, I hope he'll treat him handsomely, for he hasn't a cleverer, nor a better fellow in his dominions, and that is saying a great deal."

- "What a d—d shame to joke and laugh upon such a subject," cried Colonel Pickering, "when, if we had any hearts, we should all be dull and sad."

"Now, to my thinking," answered the host, "that would be paying a very bad compliment to the memory of a wit, which ought to make us merry instead of sad. I know it would afford me great satisfaction, if I could presume to think, that after my death, the recollection of me should excite roars of laughter."

"I don't admire practical jokes," returned Pickersgill, "so let's hear no more of that, Dick, pray. Your life may be a jest, but your death would be a very grave matter."

"*Appropos* of death, Sydenham," said one; "is it true that you're going to be married?"

"I really cannot tell you," answered I, "death is certain, as the psalmist says, and matrimony, though not quite so sure, is like the other, an event which may happen to a man when he least expects it."

"Somebody told me that you were going to marry Lady Charlotte Haviland."

"I don't see how I can marry another man's wife, for she's now Lady Charlotte Cookson, unless indeed you mean that I'm to have the reversion of her."

"I'm glad to hear you disavow the charge, Sydenham, my boy," said Lutwyche; "take my advice, and never wed, or if you do, let it not be for love, but money; when a man becomes domestic, I give him up; you cannot serve wit and woman."

"You recollect Tom Rawlinson?"

"Yes, to be sure I do, and one of the most promising lads I ever knew, but ruined by a pretty face; do you know what is become of him?"

"I had a letter from him the other day, in which he heartily wishes that his angel was in Heaven. He's heartily sick of being the happiest man alive, I promise you. He writes in low spirits, poor fellow, and begs that his memory may be drunk in solemn silence."

"It serves him right," said Dick; "what business had he to put his head into the noose?"

"It was not to be expected that he should escape, for

being a devilish good-looking fellow, he was surrounded by admirers. All the women were dying for him."

"If that had been my case," rejoined Lutwyche, who was grotesquely hideous, "I should have said with beau Fielding, 'Let them look on and die.'"

"Of fright, I suppose you mean. I recollect Singleton used to say of you, Dick, that if his wife was in the family way, he'd have you tied up, lest the sight of you should affect her offspring."

"You look as if you had been shaped by the hand of chaos, or as if Nature had designed you as a caricature of the human form."

"My father and mother were very handsome people," said Dick, who relished these compliments upon his personal appearance very highly.

"That is the reason why you are so diabolically ugly," observed Nat Callaghan; "two affirmatives make a negative."

"Nat, you have absolutely said something which might possibly be termed witty; that is portentous."

"I shall communicate the fact to Mrs. Chilton," said I, "she will add it to her catalogue of signs, which announce the approach of the battle of Armageddon."

"And who the devil is Mrs. Chilton?" was the general inquiry.

I explained. The prophetess of P—— was unbagged; the wits gave tongue, and in a few minute the poor old lady was torn to pieces.

I can recollect nothing else worthy of repetition.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ONE morning I received a letter marked "private," from my friend Ball, informing me that a meeting to petition for Reform had been *got up* by his agency, and not being aware of the course of conduct to which I had committed myself with respect to this question, urged that I should take the chair, while he moved the resolutions! He added, "It is extremely desirable with a view to *our* (!) *future project*, that you should come forward thus early and prominently, and your doing so, besides forwarding your own interest (of which I am taking care) very materially, will have an air of magnanimity, considering the relation in which you and your family have stood toward the borough. You have an opportunity of clinching the business, so pray do not delay coming, as the meeting is to be held on Tuesday next."

Now it was really too good, that after having proved too much for the most experienced and eminent flatcatchers, the Metcalfs, and the Havilands, the Tewkesburys, and the Singletons, I should at length become the tool of a provincial practitioner. I was a good deal amused by the impudence and familiarity of this profligate blackguard, whom I considered merely as one of those instruments which politicians are sometimes obliged to employ, though not without disgust, in the hidden and dirty work of their profession. As it no longer suited my purpose therefore, to keep up any further connection with this fellow, I thought proper to drop the half serious, half contemptuous manner with which I had received his former advances, and effectually to repel his vulgar presumption by the following brief note.

"Sir Matthew Sydenham informs Mr. Ball, that he cannot have the honour of presiding at the meeting on Tuesday next referred to by Mr. B., in consequence of being obliged to attend the House of Commons on that day, for the purpose of opposing the measure which it is the object of that meeting to sanction."

About a week afterward I found in one of the daily prints the following paragraph, headed "Meeting at P—— in support of His Majesty's Ministers."

"We regret that our space will not permit us to give a full report of this meeting; Mr. Thomas Ball moved the resolutions in a speech of great eloquence and ability, in the course of which he commented, with much severity, and a happy vein of ridicule upon the two families, the Houses of Haviland and Sydenham, which had hitherto usurped the privilege of returning both members for the borough. He read a most insolent note from Sir Matthew Sydenham in reply to a polite and respectful requisition which Mr. Ball had forwarded to the honourable Baronet to attend the meeting. The resolutions were passed unanimously. Too much praise cannot be given to the public-spirited conduct of Mr. Ball on this occasion, as he is an influential member of one of those corporations which are to be deprived of their exclusive privileges by the ministerial measure. The Marquis of Daventry and Sir Matthew Sydenham were burnt in effigy at the cross, in the market-place, in the evening. These demonstrations of popular feeling may serve to alarm the fears, if they cannot convince the understandings of the base, bigoted, and interested supporters of the present system of corruption," &c. &c. &c.

Politics grew every day more and more interesting, and I became so completely involved in them, that I had literally no time for private feelings. It does not come within the province of such a work as this to enter into details which belong to history, and of course I am precluded from divulging the cabinet councils of the party to which I belonged. As far as regards myself, it is sufficient to say that the share which I took in their deliberations and public proceedings was sufficiently prominent to make me a mark for the opposition both within the House and out of doors. The press indulged its peculiar talent of abuse, with great brilliancy upon my humble self, as an active anti-reformer, a *ci-devant* borough proprietor, a borough member, and lastly as a gentleman. In the House I fared better; there my enemies could not assail me from behind a wall, and it was not my practice when I had an antagonist on the floor to deal with him in a spirit of clemency. The fact is, I had a keen weapon, which I knew how to use, and which I did not spare. I made, therefore, two or three *merciful examples*, in order to deter others. The consequence was, that the Bully Bottoms who subsequently put themselves forward, roared me as gently as any sucking

dove, and were suffered to escape uninjured, because unnoticed. Not that I am an advocate for a frequent and indiscriminate flourish of this brilliant and mischievous weapon, which is contemptible unless employed merely as the auxiliary of weightier arms. It is extremely serviceable, however, in great debates, to clear the ground of the stragglers and coxcombs on both sides, who are ever ready to rush into the fray, distracting the attention of the spectators by their noise, and impeding the encounters of the regular combatants.

Political agitations seldom ruffled my equanimity. I was fearless, I may say, from conscious strength, and the absence of personal interest in the conflict. I possessed, I believe, none of the higher attributes of eloquence; I could neither thunder nor lighten, perhaps, but I could reason in perspicuous and forcible language; I was as cold, and cutting, as highly tempered and polished as steel; I could deprive others of their self-command, without for a moment losing my own, and inflict agonizing pain with a mild and gentlemanly manner. It occasionally happened that my antagonist smarting with wounds, and exasperated at being foiled at these intellectual weapons, would appeal to those of a carnal nature, with which he was more conversant. Once and only once I was really obliged to go out and stand as a mark for the lead of one, who had the preceding evening been the butt of my satire. Fortunately the blockhead did no more damage than spoiling a new hat, which was perforated by the ball intended for my brains. Apollo preserved me—

“Mercurialium
Custos virorum.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

I WAS a constant attendant at Mrs. Majendie's parties, which I could frequent without postponing parliamentary duties, as they were held on every Wednesday evening, nor had I usually any other evening engagement on that day, having refused a subscription to Almack's.—Indeed, I had altogether abandoned balls and routs, tired of quizzing my humble servants the dandies, flirting with pretty women and girls, and tormenting their husbands and mothers with the pains of jealousy, and the sickness of hope deferred. The rational and agreeable conversation which obtained in South Audley-Street was much more to my new or rather restored taste. Besides, here was the only chance of my meeting the female Paulets, whom I now scarcely ever saw at home, being, indeed, seldom asked, and always finding an ostensible excuse in my political engagements.

At these meetings it was by no means my policy to avoid coming into contact with Miss Paulet; on the contrary, we talked together with as much frankness, as if nothing had happened. Her manner had, indeed, lost that charming confidence and cordiality which it had manifested toward me at the Priory, but there was nothing extraordinary in this change, which frequently takes place in the intercourse of persons, when they meet in town after having been the most extreme friends in the country. Her diffidence and embarrassment had likewise disappeared, and she had completely recovered her self-possession. It is true I could never forgive her for having attempted to practise upon me, nor could I sink from love into friendship, even had she not lost my esteem; but still I felt myself irresistibly attracted to her society, and such was its fascination, that my belief in her hollowness was sometimes suspended, although I could never get rid of the evidence of my senses. Had the testimony been less conclusive, it could never have prevailed against the impression which I had received of her character. At those moments of delusion when I stood under the influence of her outward attractions, I was elated by a hope that

her conduct with respect to young Axford might still be explained, although it would be hard to say how or when; but conversant as I was with the hypocrisy of man and woman-kind, it was most ungrateful to think that one who was everything amiable and admirable without, could be so utterly hollow within.

Lady Jane Paulet, whose disposition was exceedingly open, could not, like her more prudent sister-in-law, control her feelings with regard to me. She continued to treat me with anger and dislike, sometimes even approaching to contempt, insomuch, that at length I thought proper considering the palpable change that had taken place in her manner, as contrasted with the kind and friendly nature of our intercourse up to a very recent period, to take some notice of it, and require, in self-justification, some explanation of this caprice, for such I must presume it to be, until I was made acquainted with its cause.

In pursuance of this resolution, I sought an opportunity one evening at Mrs. Majendie's of detaching Lady Jane from the persons near her; which I did not succeed in doing until I had whispered that I had a few words to say to her, which I did not wish to be overheard. We then walked to a table where prints were exhibited in another room, and before I could speak she asked me, with a reddening cheek and some impatience, what I had to say!

"Lady Jane," said I, "you must not consider me presumptuous or impertinent, if the estimation in which I hold your good opinion and friendship induces me to take the liberty of questioning you whether I have been so unfortunate lately as to have forfeited either?"

"Oh, certainly not—I am not aware—I know nothing of Sir Matthew—how should you have offended me?"

"Pardon me if I say that I know you too well to believe you capable of caprice, and it is impossible to mistake your manner. Something I must have unconsciously done to displease you, or I have been misrepresented. I beg, in candour and justice, that you will condescend to be explicit."

Lady Jane remained silent for a few seconds, and then answered,

"I can hardly comply with your request without the risk of being misunderstood, but I am sure that your own conduct justifies any coldness which you may experience from us. Not that I would have you suppose it gives us any concern—no, not *one* of us," she added energetically; "at the same

time I will candidly tell you that you have disappointed—that is, we took you to be a very different sort of person.”

“In what respect? you are still not wholly intelligible. Ever since I perceived the alteration in your manner, I have been full of conjectures as to the cause, but having been able to fix upon none as having a reasonable degree of probability, I determined to appeal to yourself. And I do implore you, therefore, not to evade me, as I am persuaded that by confidence on both sides, the matter may be cleared up to our mutual satisfaction.”

“Well, then, I will tell you—but, mind, I only speak for myself, and from my own observation; and I tell you plainly that if she does not perceive it, I am determined to resent anything in the shape of an attempt to slight or trifle with my sister Alice.” She stopped, and was much agitated, as if she feared going too far.

“To slight—Miss Paulet! Good Heavens, Lady Jane!”

“Yes, Sir Matthew,” interrupted she, with increased heat, “I mean by paying her such marked attention at first, and then afterwards altogether relaxing.”

“I thank you,” replied I, “for not concealing the true cause, as I can now, indeed, explain everything. Ever since my first acquaintance with your family at Christmas last, I was treated with such kindness, and subsequently admitted on a familiar footing, (I shall ever remember those days with gratitude and pleasure,) that perhaps I cultivated with more assiduity than I ought the friendship of your accomplished and most amiable sister. This did not occur to myself, until I observed that Miss Paulet was solicited by, and acquiesced in the claim of another gentleman, with whose pretensions I thought that the extreme intimacy that had subsisted between me and her was not quite consistent; therefore—”

“Claim! what claim? what other gentleman? What do you mean, Sir Matthew?”

“I really must beg your indulgence. I know that I presume in adverting to such a subject, but you must recollect that I am on my defence, and allow me some latitude.”

“Certainly,” answered Lady Jane, eagerly; “pray go on; I see here is some mistake, indeed. Do you mean Captain Axford?”

“I do.”

“Then I can assure you positively that there is not the slightest foundation for the notion you have taken into your

head. Alice considers him only as her brother—I assure you upon my honour.”

I smiled incredulously, and Lady Jane was proceeding, when, at this interesting point our conversation was broken off. Before the evening was over, however, I took an opportunity of saying to her,—

“I trust the explanation is complete, as far as I am concerned; more I have no right to demand;” and with this I offered my hand in token of reconciliation: she received it, but not without hesitation, and with no good grace. My last remark did not seem to please her.

CHAPTER XXX.

UNSATISFACTORILY as this explanation had ended on both sides, the strong denial that Lady Jane had given to the sentiments with regard to Captain Axford, which I had imputed to Alice, was certainly entitled to consideration; but though nothing, as the reader will believe, could have more delighted me than to yield her assertion implicit credit, it would be mere infatuation, after *what I had seen*, to afford it any weight. The result of my reflection on the subject was indeed to confirm the evidence against Miss Paulet, at the same time that it completely acquitted in my mind her candid sister-in-law of any participation in her schemes, with which she was obviously unacquainted.

Lady Jane, as often as I saw her, seemed desirous of resuming the subject, but I industriously avoided meeting her wishes, for a farther *éclaircissement*, under the circumstances, was not desirable. She could hardly persist in assuring me that I had misconstrued her sister's feelings toward Axford, unless I intimated that I was personally affected by them, and of course I did not choose to commit myself. Besides, even if I should give her to understand that I was interested in Miss Paulet's sentiments, I could not refuse to be convinced by her protestations, unless I gave my reason for doubting, and how could I do this without disclosing the duplicity of Alice, and causing dissention between the sisters? This was the dilemma in which I found myself. The good offices of a third person relieved me from it, and brought about that full and complete understanding which subsequently took place.

This friend was Lady Eleanor Palmer. If there was any person to whom I could have confided the secret of my heart, she was that person. Her time of life, her good sense and kindness, and the regard which I knew she entertained for myself, rendered her the most eligible adviser I could have selected upon such a matter; but I could not bear that my weakness should be exposed, even to the inquiring eye of friendship. Whenever, therefore, she attempted to advert in

a peculiar manner to the Paulets, I always evaded the topic, and she had too much discretion and delicacy to press it at an unpropitious moment.

It was some days after the above detailed conversation between Lady Jane and myself, that I was dining with the Palmers by themselves, when Palmer being obliged to go to the house early upon business, Lady Eleanor and I were left together.

"Have you seen the Paulets lately?" inquired she.

"Yes, a few days ago."

"Don't you think Alice is looking very ill?"

"No, it did not strike me so; she seemed in very good spirits the other evening at Mrs. Majandie's. But, if it were otherwise, it would not be surprising in a young lady in her situation."

"How do you mean?"

"Why she has an *affaire*, you know."

"With whom, pray?"

"With Captain Axford, the Member's son."

"I assure you, you were never more mistaken. She has no thoughts of young Axford; I know that *for a fact*."

I smiled.

"What should make you suppose it? Indeed it is not true."

"I am sure you believe so," answered I, "but it occurred to me by mere accident to be possessed of such a proof to the contrary, that you must excuse me if I say that you are the mistaken party."

"You astonish me; what possible proof could you have had? you have no objection to tell me?"

"I certainly have no objection to tell you, but you are the only person to whom I would mention it, and I do so in confidence, simply to set you right upon the matter. It would be utterly unjustifiable in me to gossip the thing about, and if it is a secret, I only regret that I was involuntarily put in possession of it." I then plainly described what I had witnessed in the garden.

"Well," said Lady Eleanor, after a few moments' pause, "now I have heard your story, and I don't think it by any means such conclusive evidence as you do. Are you aware that this young man has been long attached to Alice Paulet, and proposed for her some time ago?"

"I was not aware of that fact, but it was quite clear that

Axford admired her. Do you mean to say that there is not a mutual feeling?"

"I can only tell you that she refused him, and it is likely that her extreme tenderness of giving pain, might have caused her to decline his offer, in such a manner as not utterly to extinguish hope. But I am sure, from your description, that surprise and grief were the only emotions which she experienced, on the occasion you refer to."

"Is this your real opinion?" said I.

"Indeed, indeed it is," answered Lady Eleanor, with much earnestness; "you have altogether mistaken her; I now see through it all. She has a strong feeling of regard for Captain Axford, but nothing more, believe me; her affections," added my friend, with a significance which could not be misunderstood, "I have reason to suspect, are otherwise engaged."

"You have relieved my mind inexpressibly; yes, my dear Lady Eleanor, I should be unworthy of your kindness, did I hesitate any longer to confess, that I am deeply interested in Miss Paulet's sentiments: now tell me, I beseech you, whether you think I should be received with favour."

Lady Eleanor's countenance sufficiently answered the question.

"I think," said she with a smile, "I can venture to afford you some faint hope. How happy I am that this mystery has been elucidated! for though I was well aware that you were sometimes disposed to be not quite so respectful as you ought towards our sex, I had too good an opinion of your discrimination and taste, to suppose that you would presume to consider Alice Paulet a person to be treated with levity. When I heard, therefore, how much you were in her society, I own I did hope that the influence of her character might restore to you a more healthy tone of feeling with regard to women; nay, more, it was my favourite wish that I might see you united."

"You could not wish me a more enviable fortune."

"I am delighted to hear you say so, Sydenham, for I have always fought your battles, and maintained against those who asserted the contrary, that you were neither heartless nor depraved, and that your misanthropy was brought on by bad associates. The world contains much, no doubt, to excite indignation and disgust, but still it presents at least as much to inspire different sentiments. Now what are you

reflecting about? Come, I must not suffer you to relapse into any of your suspicions."

"Believe me," answered I, "they are too unwelcome guests, and I have suffered too much from them already, to be desirous of entertaining them longer, but still Lady Eleanor's complete conviction must supply their place, otherwise they will intrude."

"Conviction! unreasonable man! what do you require? Am I to tell you that a young lady has acknowledged her attachment to a gentleman who has never declared himself?"

"Certainly," answered I, "that would be exceedingly indelicate."

"And permit me to add," rejoined Lady Eleanor, "exceedingly mean-spirited; I hope that no friend of mine will ever so far compromise the dignity of her sex. But, joking apart, are you not delighted to have this matter cleared up?"

"Why then, setting aside the dignity of my own sex, I do confess that I am greatly elated by the explanation which you have given; and if my suit should be favoured by Miss Paulet, I become the happiest man alive."

"I wish," cried Lady Eleanor, "you would commission me as your ambassadress."

"Many thanks, my dear friend; I shall certainly take advantage of your kind offer, but not just immediately; I will sleep a night upon it."

"Very well; and now, Sir, away with you to the House, public duty must not be postponed for any consideration. But if you should rise, take care that you don't address the speaker, as 'dearest Alice!'"

CHAPTER XXXI.

It would be difficult to say whether I felt most rejoiced at being disabused of my delusions with respect to Miss Paullet's conduct, or at the prospect which was opened to me by the dissipation of those clouds. It was delightful to find that the woman whom I had believed to approach the nearest to perfection, was not indeed a hypocrite, and certainly not less gratifying was it to be assured that she was not the property of another. I could not well endure so sudden an elevation, from the depth of despondency to the pinnacle of hope, inasmuch that the caution of Lady Eleanor was scarcely exaggerated, for so entirely was my mind occupied by this exhilarating subject, that upon reaching the House, I must have talked, I suppose, in a rather incoherent manner, being recalled to my senses by a member asking me with a significant smile,

"Sydenham, where have you been dining?"

That I might not act under the influence of excitement, I took two days to reflect before I committed myself. The result was, my full conviction that Lady Eleanor's explanation was entitled to implicit credit, and that it would be ungracious any longer to defer bringing the matter to a crisis. My determination was candidly to lay before Alice the history of my feelings during the last six months, doubting not, that the apparent caprice which I had of late shown would be thus fully accounted for to her satisfaction, and it would then only remain for her to consult her own inclinations, in deciding upon my proposal.

But, as if a malignant fate had decided ever to interpose between me and any happiness founded upon good feeling, and to prevent me from adopting any opinions favourable to human nature, on the very morning that I purposed putting my important resolve into execution, I received, by the two-penny post, the following letter.

"SIR,

I am perfectly aware, that in addressing you anonymously, I do not entitle myself to your serious consideration: If cir-

cumstances permitted, would willingly confirm this letter by my name, but even with the disadvantage of its absence, and the imputation of malignity that may consequently attach to me, I cannot resist the impulse I feel to make even this feeble effort to save you from becoming a victim to hypocrisy and manœuvring. You will be surprised what motive sufficiently strong, could have induced me to interfere upon this occasion, at the hazard of being treated with contempt as a slanderer, when I tell you that I have not the honour of your personal acquaintance, but I know those who have that advantage, and from their testimonies respecting you, I have been inspired with a high admiration of your character, and an interest in your welfare. I have therefore heard with regret, that you are about to be married to the sister of Mr. P——, the member for D——. As to Mr. P. himself, I have nothing to say against him; I believe that he is an excellent and honourable man. His sister, however, be it known to you, is not a person of exactly the same description. You have probably been deceived by the extreme amiability which she affects, and are not aware that she has made several unsuccessful attempts upon young men of fortune. I may specify among others, Lord H., Mr. St. J., and Captain A. The captain was her last failure before she undertook her present speculation, which, I trust, may likewise be frustrated; though she brings matured years and the effects of her experience to bear upon it. I should indeed be sorry to see the accomplished, shrewd, discriminating Sir Matthew Sydenham, who has hitherto overreached all the arts of knavery that have been practised upon him, both in public and private life, fall at length a sacrifice to a female jobber, and become a laughing-stock to his *friends*. And as he has mentioned *friends*, the writer would warn you to beware of a certain elderly lady of quality, with whom you are on terms of intimacy, and who is in the interest of Miss P.

“A HATER OF HUMBUG.”

Perhaps I may be considered unjust and weak for having paid any respect to this epistle; but if it did not actually reopen the wounds that were just closed, in truth it gave me great uneasiness. Opinions such as mine were not to be changed in a day, and though I had of late been approaching to a more indulgent way of thinking with regard to human nature, I was still more open to evidence against, than in favour of mankind. It is true that this disposition should

have caused me to distrust the motives of this anonymous writer. His assertions were probably slanderous and false, but they might likewise be well founded; he must be a person who had information on the subject, being accurate in the individuals whom he had specified as having been connected with Miss Paulet's name. His version, however, differed from mine in an essential point—the anonymous writer said they had never asked her, whereas I had heard that she had declined them. My information was not derived either from herself or her brother, who had never made any allusion of the kind, but from Lady Jane, who once mentioned it to me, accounting for her sister's refusal of such desirable matches in a worldly point of view, on the ground that the one was an old man, and the other an objectionable character. But certainly it was not an uncommon practice for young ladies and their families to give out that they had refused men who had never afforded them an opportunity of expressing their sentiments. It was easy to suppose that the Miss Paulet of my fancy might act from such motives, but scarcely possible that the character described by the "Hater of Humbug," could be thus influenced. I felt a qualm of ingratitude, as well as injustice in entertaining for a moment the insinuation relative to Lady Eleanor Palmer, but still she might not consider it inconsistent with her regard for me, to assist her friend in endeavouring to secure such a *desirable*. Women, even the most scrupulous in every article of morality, and propriety, think such stratagems perfectly fair and justifiable.

But who might my correspondent be? It was impossible to form any conjecture from the hand-writing, which was evidently disguised and unnatural; besides, he said that he was unknown to me; could the writer be either Lord H—, or Mr. St. J—, with whom I was not personally acquainted? Though from good feeling they might have been desirous of warning me against being betrayed by wiles, which had been practised upon themselves, they might certainly have felt a reluctance to do so avowedly. I could not but think that the probability was strongly in favour of one of these gentlemen. I can assure the reader that it was with great reluctance I came to this conclusion; I would willingly have believed the letter to have been the offspring of malice or mischief, but I could not help feeling, notwithstanding my wish to treat it with contempt, that it was deserving of attention.

The consequence was, that my offer to Miss Paulet was postponed *sine die*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

To let the matter rest, however, in such a situation was impossible; Lady Eleanor would wonder why I delayed making my proposals, and after the confidence which had been exchanged between us on the subject, she had undoubtedly a right to expect explanation, which, indeed, it was likewise due to myself to make. The real cause I could not of course communicate, and what excuse was I to put forth?

Besides, my own feelings were too deeply interested to remain in repose under the influence of this letter. Whatever weight I might allow it to possess, I could not suffer my conduct to be governed by it; on the contrary, it was my duty as well as my interest to leave no means untried of falsifying its assertions. This was certainly difficult, as they were of a general character; but if I could ascertain the fact of proposals having been made to Miss Paulet by Lord H—, or Mr. St. J—, I should be fully satisfied, and not hesitate another moment to make my own. I had every reason to believe from personal experience, that the writer was misinformed, or wilful in his misrepresentation, with respect to young Axford; for I should suppose it was not usual for gentlemen to kneel to ladies of character without proposing marriage. But this circumstance did not by any means acquit Miss Paulet, for she had then two strings to her bow; she probably felt pretty sure of me, and it appeared gave me the preference: under this view of her conduct, her undecided manner to that young man was clearly accounted for; she was desirous of still keeping her hold upon him as an alternative, should her design upon me fail. The inaccuracy of his statement with reference to Axford, therefore, went for nothing, except inasmuch as it afforded me reason to hope, that, as regarded the other two gentlemen, it might prove to be equally false or erroneous.

I was determined to sift the matter to the bottom, and make up my mind definitively with respect to Miss Paulet, for I

could no longer endure to be distracted with doubt. Meanwhile I pleaded to Lady Eleanor the pressure of my parliamentary duties for postponing to enter into *mes affaires du cœur*. The excuse was a lame one; but Lady Eleanor accepted it, though not without some manifestation of disappointment. My first object naturally was to become acquainted with Mr. St. John, one of the individuals indicated in the anonymous letter. Lord Haunteray, the other, was abroad somewhere, but this circumstance by no means acquitted him of the authorship of the letter, because in the constant intercourse which exists between this country and the Continent, there is a regular export and import of gossip and scandal. Nothing was more probable, therefore, than that he should have heard of my attentions to Miss Paulet, and he could have had very little difficulty in forwarding this anonymous letter to me, had he thought it worth his while to do so. It may be asked, what was the use of seeking the acquaintance of St. John, for surely if he had written the letter, he would be sufficiently on his guard not to suffer anything to escape him relative thereto. But I had a high opinion of my own dexterity in *pumping*; besides, it would answer my purpose if I could ascertain how he stood with respect to the Paulets, and this at least I thought might be effected.

St. John was notoriously a man of loose morals, but I had sufficient reliance on his honour as a gentleman, to believe that he would be incapable of calumniating any person. I had no reason to suppose that he belonged to the class of profligates, of whom my uncle was a remarkable specimen.

I soon found an opportunity of being introduced to Mr. St. John, who was in parliament, but a rare attendant at the House, being more occupied in the pursuit of his pleasures, than by ambition or public duty. He was of the same party with myself, especially on the great question in agitation, therefore it was the most natural thing in the world that we should become known to each other. I met him, of course, with the indifference of a common political acquaintance, not to hazard the possibility of alarming suspicion. My conversation with him was at first principally confined to politics; and as I so contrived that we happened to meet frequently, we soon became, in some sort, friends. I then watched my moment for adverting to *the* topic. I took the opportunity one day, when we were discussing the reigning belles, married and single. After canvassing the merits of

several, I observed that I had met with a girl in the country, who did not go out much in town, but who had struck me as being a remarkably attractive person. I then named Miss Paulet.

"Ay, so she is," said St. John, "a very superior girl; I haven't seen much of her lately, but I knew her very well three or four years ago."

"And what do you think of her? I should like to know whether she really is that paragon which she seems to set up for."

"Why, I'm rather inclined to think that she is. I can only say that if she were a married woman, she is the last person I should think of making any attempt upon. Such is the impression which she made upon me."

"Well, you ought to be a good judge, for you've had experience, St. John; you've practised in that line for some time."

"I should certainly," answered the rake, "be a devilish dull fellow, if I did not know something about the sex; I've studied them for twenty years, Sydenham."

"And with tolerable success, I believe. I should like much to know the result of your labours."

"No doubt you would, but judge for yourself; you are both able and willing, I fancy, for if I mistake not, you were a pupil of poor Trevelyan's?"

"Ay, poor fellow, but he was so blinded with vanity, that there was no reliance to be placed on his opinions. For my own part, I'm an infidel as regards female virtue."

"Depend upon it then, you are wrong. You may have been fortunate hitherto, and possibly you've only had dealings with town-bred women, but you mustn't form your judgment of the sex from them. Now it has occurred to me, in the course of my life, to have to do with women of all classes, and I can assure you that though pretty cautious in committing myself, I have frequently been repulsed by the sheer force of virtue."

"I am afraid you have been unlucky," said I, laughing; "you have encountered too many Miss Paulets."

"No, by Jove! I never encountered anything of the kind; these were quite every-day characters of whom I speak, very different from Alice Paulet; there's a *je ne sais quoi* about that girl; a sort of native purity and dignity which I think no person with a spark of discernment, or gentlemanly

feeling would presume to approach, except in a legitimate way."

I affected a smile of incredulity, which St. John perceived, and declared in a tone which it was impossible to doubt, "I am serious, upon my honour!"

Could I, after this conversation, hesitate to acquit St. John of the authorship of the anonymous letter?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BUT though St. John was thus clearly acquitted of having written the letter, there was still Lord Hauteray, upon whom my suspicion might rest with equal probability. It was not so easy, however, to bring matters to the proof with respect to him, and this tormented me. He was many years older than Alice, and from what I heard of him, seemed to be a sort of neutral character—that is, with no prominent traits either the one way or the other, but respectable and amiable, rather than otherwise. This certainly was not exactly the description of person likely to engage the affections of the Miss Paulet whom I esteemed and admired; but if she were actuated by mere worldly views and feelings, such passive qualities, if they were not precisely a recommendation, would assuredly be no objection to a woman of fashion, to whom personal endowments in a husband are the least important consideration. There was one strong consolatory argument, however, which occurred to me in the case of Lord Hauteray. It was beyond a doubt that he had paid great attentions to Alice. How was it likely that such an one, as he had been represented to me, would trifle with the feelings of a young girl? I well understood the class to which Lord Hauteray belonged, and I knew that a soberer, more matter-of-fact kind of people did not exist. Undoubtedly he would have been incapable of carrying a flirtation into effect, even could he have designed it. It was much more probable that he should be actuated by petty malice on account of his refusal.

I confess that I derived great pleasure from the contemplation of this argument. Then I began to question myself, whether it was not unjust and absurd to allow this anonymous slander any weight; I paid my own boasted discernment a bad compliment in suffering it to prevail for an instant against my own intimate experience of the person whom it affected. But then the accursed garden scene recurred—had it not been for that, I should have flung the letter into the fire at once, and banished it with contempt from my recollection. This objection, however, I overcame, and taught myself to

appreciate the motives which could dictate such an unmanly and malignant proceeding. A new light now streamed upon my mind. It was a woman who had written the letter. It could be no one else. My belief is, that ninety-five out of every hundred anonymous letters, proceed from the gentler sex; it is a measure which could emanate only from the soul of an attorney, or a woman, who is obliged to resort to such means of gratifying her revenge, for want of better. Several ladies immediately presented themselves to my recollection, to whom I gave ample credit, for the capability of taking such a step. All those, both matrons and maidens, who had courted my notice, and had obtained it, but of a kind more mortifying than positive neglect—was it illiberal to suppose that some one of them would be induced to give a vent to her spleen, at hearing that the imperturbable and sarcastic baronet, upon whom they had in vain exhausted all their blandishments, had at length yielded to the force of other charms? What could be more likely than that some of the Havilands had endeavoured to throw this obstruction in the way. And on re-perusing the letter, it appeared to me that it must have been written by some one who was personally acquainted with my character, and who knew how to alarm my suspicions. In fact, any woman in the world who had ever known me, might have written it.

How then should I act? Why suffer myself to be blown about by every breath of suspicion and circumstance? It would be weakness any longer to endure this state of mind. This affair actually suspended my faculties, and prevented me occupying my time about any other pursuits; and what satisfaction, after all, was to be gained by entertaining these interminable doubts and distractions? I was resolved to bring the business to a settlement, and that too without any farther delay.

I had put the anonymous letter in my pocket, and was about going to Lady Eleanor Palmer, for the purpose of opening my whole mind to her upon the subject, when a note was delivered to me from herself, requesting that I would call upon her at my earliest convenience, as she wished to speak to me about something of importance.

I had little time for conjecture, as to the nature of the particular business upon which I was wanted, for Palmer's house was but three minutes' walk from my own, and I followed upon the heels of Lady Eleanor's messenger.

"I thank you," said she, "for the promptitude with which

you have answered my summons. I will not employ a word of circumlocution in what I have to communicate to you. Read that." So saying, she put into my hands a letter, which, to my surprise, was in the same constrained and artificial hand-writing as that which had caused me so much uneasiness. On looking at the signature, I found only these words. "A Friend to Innocence." It was clear that this "Friend of Innocence," and my "Hater of Humbug," were one and the same person. But to the contents.—They were slanders and insinuations against my character. I was represented as a heartless libertine; a man without principle or feeling; but with sufficient talent and accomplishment to assume every cameleon shade of character to deceive the persons with whom I associated, whether for purposes of malice or profligacy. It was addressed to Miss Paulet. The writer's apology was indignation against vice and fraud, and a desire to preserve amiability and worth, from deception and misery.

"Well," cried Lady Eleanor, eagerly, when I had scarcely yet finished the perusal, during which she had studied my countenance with intense anxiety; "what do you say to it?"

"My answer is short, and, I trust, conclusive." So saying, I drew from my pocket, and handed her the other of the twin epistles. She observed this motion with an expression of surprise; but immediately received and devoured my letter with trembling haste. Having read it, she uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Thank Heaven! I am more happy than I can express! my bane and antidote are now both before me!"

"Believe me I am not less relieved than yourself, by this exchange of letters. It is most satisfactory that each has received the most conclusive refutation that could be offered, by the production of the other. I would give a thousand pounds to discover the author."

"Whoever the base wretch may be," answered Lady Eleanor, "he or she is unworthy of a moment's consideration. Let us rather congratulate each other that this explanation has taken place. Oh, how could you keep such a letter in your possession a day, without communicating it to me, or some other mutual friend? And how could you, for a moment, doubt, and on such evidence, my darling Alice? But I will not reproach you, for I am too happy that both parties are exonerated."

In the openness of the moment, and the delight with which this *éclaircissement* filled me, I committed myself, and acknowledged fully to Lady Eleanor my sentiments with respect to Alice Paulet. Her benevolent countenance betrayed the pleasure which this communication afforded her; and consequently she no longer hesitated to disclose to me the grateful fact, that Alice entertained reciprocal sentiments. She had, from the first, been in possession of the secret; but her young friend's honour had thus, as it were, been placed in her guardianship, and she could not possibly say a word upon the subject, until I had confessed myself. She now declared her complete satisfaction at what had taken place. "I had always set my heart upon this match," said she; "I knew that you would appreciate real excellence, for I always said that your contempt of the world proceeded from fastidiousness, and not from coldness of heart. How dear Jane will rejoice, for she was really beginning to hate you, because she thought you slighted her sister."

"I assure you," answered I, "that none of the party can be more gratified than I am at coming to an explanation, but—"

"Surely," interrupted Lady Eleanor, "there is no happiness without a 'but;' yet I should like to know what business that ominous monosyllable should have at present."

"Nothing of importance," I replied; "nothing which cannot, I dare say, be easily explained. I am confident you would wish that suspicion should be utterly eradicated from my mind; for if the smallest part of it were suffered to remain, there is no security that at some future period it will not sprout up afresh."

I then proceeded to relate to her my misgivings with respect to Captain Axford; and especially that shrubby scene, which had been the foundation of all my doubt and misery.

"And is this really the cause of your keeping back? Well, I suspected as much from your conversation the other day, and I said as much as I then could to do away such an impression. It is now, however, necessary I should tell that young Axford, poor fellow, had proposed for Alice, before you ever saw her. Unfortunately for him, her refusal was given in such gentle and considerate terms, as not entirely to destroy hope. He renewed his addresses on his return to the country where you met him. Alice, apprehensive of such an event, but still doubtful whether his attentions were not sug-

gested purely by sentiments of the same regard which she felt toward him, did not adopt a sufficiently decisive manner. The consequence was, that he renewed his solicitations with more earnestness than before, though with a much worse chance of success; for you know how her affections had been since disposed of. This, I assure you, is the whole truth of the matter. Are you satisfied?"

"How is it possible, my dear Lady Eleanor, that I should be otherwise? This is the happiest day of my life. I shall be ashamed to look Miss Paulet in the face, after my capricious and distrustful conduct. Can she forget and forgive it, think you?"

"I think I can hold out to you some hope that you will not find her altogether implacable," answered Lady Eleanor, with a smile. "When do you propose making your atonement?"

"Without delay—to-morrow!"

"To-morrow! why not to-day? I have no patience with your to-morrows."

"Well, be it so; I will go there forthwith."

"Take your hat then and your departure; I never welcomed you with such pleasure, as I now turn you out of the house."



CHAPTER XXXIV.

I PROCEEDED straightway to Paulet's house, but was denied, and returning home I had leisure to reflect upon what had passed between me and Lady Eleanor Palmer. View that conversation and communication in whatever light I could, it would be mere captiousness to withhold from them my entire confidence, or to refuse to admit that they were, in every respect, completely satisfactory. If I had any regard for human evidence or integrity, I must allow this. A conspiracy defeated strengthens a government, and the exposure of the base attempt of my anonymous enemy to malign Lady Eleanor and Alice Paulet, heightened and confirmed my esteem for those admirable persons. Thank Heaven! then all my doubts were dissipated, my misery terminated, my disappointment converted into brilliant hope! My discernment had not been deceived, and there was some virtue extant.

From what a weight was my mind relieved! Under the impression that I had fixed my best affections upon one, who was either unworthy of, or incapable of returning my regard, life had been deprived of the only lasting charm that it had ever presented to me, and, not to speak it sentimentally, I cared not how soon I should be rid of such a wearisome existence. Disgusted with the fancied ill success of my first disposition to regard man and womankind with a favourable eye, I was fast relapsing into the habits of the worst period of my misanthropy. But now how was the scene changed! the transition was altogether to the opposite extreme, and such was the reaction, that I was now tempted to repudiate my former opinions, and to think henceforth generously of the whole world.

Upon consideration I preferred communicating my sentiments to Miss Paulet in writing, rather than a personal interview, in the first instance. I wrote therefore a candid statement of my feelings, and explanation of my conduct. I told her, with perfect truth, that she was the only one of her sex who had impressed me with that degree of respect and admi-

ration which was essential to the sentiment I now ventured to profess. I concealed none of my past suspicions as to the nature of her intercourse with Captain Axford, because this confession was necessary to account for my conduct; I was indebted to the kind offices of a mutual friend, for removing that unfortunate misunderstanding, to whom likewise I was placed under an everlasting obligation for having entirely confirmed me, if at any time I had suffered the habits of my character and former experience so far to prevail, as to affect my belief in the sincerity of Miss Paulet herself. I expressed my deepest gratitude to her for having rejected with indignation the charges and insinuations contained in the anonymous letter, and referred her to the corresponding document in Lady Eleanor Palmer's possession to corroborate her estimate of the writer's motives. I concluded by offering her in the most earnest language that I could command, my hand, and fortune, and devoted love.

Within four-and-twenty hours after this important communication had been despatched I received her answer. I need not speak of the palpitation which the sight of her hand-writing produced, and the breathless anxiety with which I read the following letter:

"I should be unworthy of the frankness with which you have treated me, were I to feel a moment's hesitation in acknowledging that your letter has afforded me more gratification than any other event within my recollection. At the same time, however, that I make this admission, and give entire credit to your explanation respecting the circumstances of the last six months, I must decline at present to receive the sentiments which you have expressed as conclusive. Both for your sake and my own, I must adhere to my determination of begging that you will abstain from any hasty measure, which in the impulse of the moment, you might feel disposed to urge. You say that I am the first person for whom you have felt a preference, but this partiality may be transient and unreal. You will no doubt tell me the contrary, but time only can enable you to speak with any confidence upon this point; should we now enter into a rash engagement, what bitter repentance would be left to you when the delusion was past; as for myself the most cruel disappointment in the first instance, would be a trifle compared with the misery to which I should be condemned for life. The sentiments you have expressed invest me with a right to give utterance to my

wishes; I exact no promise from you, you are as free as if I had never experienced from you any other attentions than those of a common acquaintance. I could wish to see little or nothing of you for the next year, at the expiration of which, if you found your present feelings unchanged, I do not think I should be disposed to offer any farther obstacle.

“ALICE PAULET.”

At first I felt disposed to quarrel with this letter, as being cold and calculating, but a little reflection brought me to view it in its true character. I felt, indeed, that my past life was not the best guarantee for happiness in the matrimonial state. It is certain I had the reputation of a man of pleasure, though I was an object of detestation to certain ladies for the mockery which, in the wantonness of spleen and conscious power, I had practised upon them. I cannot deny, however, that I had some *liaisons*, with the particulars of which I have not thought it necessary to trouble the reader, for in truth they would tell, in no point of view, to my credit. More heartless, listless connections never existed. These were a source of continual uneasiness to me, while I was on terms of probation, as it were, with the Paulet family. I was apprehensive lest they should come to the ears of Alice, before I had gained a sufficient interest in her affections to enable me to hope that such a disclosure would not be fatal to my hopes. Paulet himself, from not mingling much in gay society, was imperfectly acquainted with the character which I had borne in those circles. He was of course not ignorant of my connection with the Oliphants, for this was once a nine days' wonder, but he was satisfied that my conduct had been misrepresented in that business, although he was not aware that I had designedly trifled with the lady. Paulet was no puritan; but the nobleness of his mind, and his natural character, led him to avoid every sensuality and baseness, and to view them, not through the false medium which the world interposes, but with the unsophisticated eye of virtue. A profligate character was therefore extremely offensive to his high morality. I well knew that he would have held no such intimate communion with me as that which existed between us, had his opinion of me coincided with that of the world. In truth, I felt humbled in the presence of this high-minded person, but it was a salutary humility, which caused me to blush at my past life, and to feel a sincere desire of amendment. At the same time I knew myself too well to hope that I could ac-

comply with this without assistance; I felt that my amelioration was dependant upon my union with Alice.

It is needless to tell the reader how I dwelt upon her letter, and most especially that first sentence, which was the soul of it. I shall not expose myself to laughter by giving a catalogue of the extravagancies which I committed under the excitement which it produced. These fooleries are excusable under such circumstances, and I hope most men and women have indulged in them at some period of their lives; but, nevertheless, they do not read well, so I draw a veil over this part of the business, and come to the first interview that took place between Alice and myself, after the mutual expression of our sentiments.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BUT previously I must mention, that I considered it due to Mr. Paulet, as the nearest surviving relative of his sister, who lived under his guardianship, to communicate to him the step which I had taken. Indeed my private respect and regard for the man would have made me ask for his sanction, even had not etiquette demanded it.

"I thank you, Sydenham," answered he, "for this early information of your purposes. But I am already acquainted with them: my sister has shown me your letter; what her reply has been I know not, for I declined influencing her judgment in the slightest degree in a matter upon which she alone ought to decide. I only spoke to the best of my knowledge and belief of your character. Whatever her choice may be, I am quite confident that it will meet my entire approbation."

To this I made answer by laying before him his sister's letter. He read it with an earnest attention, scarcely less than my own, and his satisfaction at the contents was most vividly depicted in his countenance. Having read it he grasped my hand warmly.

"My dear Sydenham," said he, "I congratulate you from my soul. This is no moment for affectation. You have been acquainted with Alice only for a few months; I have known her intimately since she was a child, and, without partiality I assure you she is superior to any of her sex that I have ever known, yet I have the happiness of numbering amongst my friends and connections many most amiable women. I observed with pleasure the growing intimacy between my sister and yourself, because I believed that you could appreciate her excellence; and though I will not conceal from you that I could wish for a change in some of your opinions and practice, (I may take the freedom of saying so much now,) yet I am persuaded that upon the whole you and my sister are well suited to each other."

I need not say that I returned these kind expressions with equal warmth and candour. To be the accepted of Alice, and

the approved of her brother, I felt to be really more than my deserts, although, as the reader has by this time possibly perceived, I by no means underrated them. I was, in point of fact, the happiest of mankind.

In this state of mind I prepared to encounter Alice—not, however, with that coolness and confidence with which I had been wont to go forth to similar scenes, but absolutely nervous and diffident as a neophyte; consequently I did not expect to get through my part with half the address with which I usually acquitted myself.

The meeting was at her brother's house. Nothing could be more marked than Lady Jane's reception of me upon this occasion. The ungracious manner which had recently given me so much offence was replaced by more than her former warmth and cordiality. Though she said nothing on the subject, her looks plainly told how much she repented having misconstrued my conduct. The constancy of Alice was comparatively less affected than my own by our meeting. She returned the pressure of my hand—was slightly tremulous, certainly—but there were no airs and graces, no unnecessary blushing and confusion assumed.

During dinner the conversation was general, and but little of it. Soon after the cloth was removed, Paulet withdrew to the House, and I followed the ladies to the drawing-room.

I found no one there besides Lady Jane and her sister. The former, in her anxiety to leave Alice and me together, retired with some precipitation a few minutes after I had entered the room. Alice blushed, and I smiled, as our eyes met, with the consciousness of this well-meaning movement. After a pregnant pause of a few seconds, I opened the expected conference.

"How can I ever be sufficiently grateful to you," said I, "for overlooking all my waywardness and caprice! but you know the cause, and believe me I have suffered almost enough to atone for it."

"I know it all; I am too happy in this explanation, to think of the past: you are guilty of no waywardness or caprice; you were under a misconception, for which I was to blame."

"I am rejoiced that you fully comprehend my conduct. Indeed, I have loved you with a most sincere and ardent affection; and my professions are entitled to the more respect, because I can honestly declare, that in all my experience of your sex, which has not been very limited, to you alone could I give my

heart and hand ; nay, I may say with truth, that I have never known the slightest sentiment of attachment for any other woman. The love that I offer you, Alice, is not the head-strong passion of a boy, but the profound esteem and reasoned warmth of a man, who has seen much of the world, whose feelings are slow in their operation, and who is in no danger of being deluded by the semblance of a sentiment, which has no solid foundation. In setting out in life, I did not expect domestic happiness, because I thought it improbable that I should come in contact with one who combined all those qualities, without which I was persuaded, from a knowledge of my own character, I could not appreciate the felicity of the matrimonial state. You, however—and credit me, I speak this in sober earnestness, for I would not trifle with you by idle rhapsodies—you, dearest Miss Paulet, have realized the image of my fancy—I do not exaggerate when I say, that you excel my liveliest expectations. To have gained your regard, I consider the highest good fortune ; no event could be more flattering to my ambition, and this world can offer me no prospect half so attractive as union with you.”

To this declaration, Alice listened with earnest and gratified attention.

After a short silence I proceeded. “There is only one part of your letter which I am disposed to murmur at : why should you urge such a delay ? Can you not be satisfied of my stability without a twelve-months probation ? I pray you, dearest Alice, not to insist upon that ; it looks like lukewarmness on your part.”

“You would do me great injustice,” replied Miss Paulet, “were you to imagine that I had any other motive or object in proposing this delay, than the security of your happiness and my own. I only entreat you, Sydenham, not to be precipitate, but to reflect with me on the solemn and vital engagement upon which we would enter. Let us not incur it, before we have ascertained whether our tastes are alike, and whether the partiality which you now experience, I am sure with perfect sincerity, will stand the test of time, absence, and your mind being occupied with different pursuits. From what I have seen of you, I have no reason to doubt your steadiness, but we have known each other only in the country, and the habits of your past life have not been those to which you were accustomed in B—shire. Their only charm might be that of novelty, and farther experience might bring you to a true sense of the wearisomeness and ennui of such

a life; it is the only one, however, in which I could find satisfaction, and I am fully persuaded that I should be as incapable of administering to the happiness of a man of the world, as such a character would be unsuitable to me."

"True," I rejoined, "that I have been a man of the world; to the mere fact I must plead guilty, but I adopted that profession solely because I had nothing else to do. Most sincerely can I affirm that at no period have I followed such pursuits from the bent of my disposition; even in the most dazzling passages of my past career, my eyes have penetrated its delusive brilliancy, and my heart and soul have yearned after some condition of more solid and permanent felicity. When I saw you, and was admitted into your domestic circle, I felt that my dream was realized; life is short, and why should a year of happiness be sacrificed to the scruples of over fastidiousness. I implore you therefore not to press this point, but if you have any confidence in man, repose it in my sincerity and conviction of my own unchangeableness. Say at once that you will be mine, and thus afford the best guarantee for both. You cannot be ignorant of your own surpassing qualities, and being conscious of them, you must think me as dull, and as hard as stone, could you doubt, that by their influence, I should be restored to just principles and right conduct, even were my heart corrupted, and my tastes depraved, which I devoutly hope you do not suspect them to be."

"Indeed, indeed I do not," cried Alice earnestly, and pressing my hand in the emphasis with which she disclaimed such a humiliating opinion. "Rather than that you should seriously suppose that it proceeded from doubt or indifference, I would abandon my proposal without another word."

"I cannot," answered I, "for one moment attribute it to such motives, even to redeem this year of endurance."

"That is kind—that is generous—it is what I should have expected from you, and does more to shake my resolution than any argument or persuasion you could offer: if I limit the time, then, to six months, will you desist from farther opposition?"

"I am in your power, and you may prescribe to me what terms you please. The time you prescribe will seem to me an age, but I will yield to it without farther importunity; only let me pledge to you my devoted and eternal love!"

"No!" cried Alice, stopping me; "I will receive no such pledge; I utterly reject it! What! should I bind your

honour to fulfil the engagement although your inclination might have ceased? Heaven forbid! it is to guard against such a possibility, and for no other reason, that I urge delay. In the mean time you are as free as air: if at the expiration of the period I have named, you should find a change in your present feelings, I adjure you candidly to say so; you will not lose one atom of my good opinion by such a frank acknowledgment; but should you, on the contrary, be actuated by a false notion of honour to fulfil your present intentions, with different feelings, you will condemn both yourself and me to a life of misery."

"Well," I replied, "I am content to undergo this ceremony of probation, for it is nothing more as far as I am concerned. Of course, however, I must exact this same promise on your part with respect to me."

"I freely give it," answered Alice.

"May I not sometimes see you in this dreary interval?"

"Perhaps I do violence to my wishes in desiring that we should meet as seldom as possible," answered she with a smile which alone was sufficient to keep my love alive six months, "but I shall be glad to hear that you are mingling unreservedly with the world; indeed your public duties ought to occupy you during the greater part of that time."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WITH a gay heart did I leave Paulet's house on that memorable evening. All my doubts and anxieties were terminated; I was placed beyond the reach of Fortune; I did not foresee the possibility of her bringing about any event or concurrence of circumstances, which could embitter a moment of the future. My own life and that of Alice being spared, I saw nothing in the prospective but unmitigated happiness.

I hastened to communicate the particulars of my interview with Alice, to our mutual and deeply interested friend, Lady Eleanor Palmer. She was at her toilette when I was announced, but such was the eagerness of her anxiety to know what had taken place, that she sent for me to her dressing-room, and dismissing her maid, immediately inquired for my intelligence. "But I see by your countenance," added she before I could speak, "that everything has gone smoothly. You are the happiest of men, I am sure; well, let me hear it all."

I then related to her nearly according to the details in the last chapter, all that had passed between Alice and myself. She congratulated me warmly, and expressed the highest admiration of the conduct of Alice. Rather for the sake of Lady Eleanor's vindication and renewed eulogies of her young friend, than to satisfy any real scruple of my own, I let fall some doubts, whether it did not imply too much temperance of feeling. "In fact," said I, "if she has any fault, don't you think that is the one?"

"Now you are too provoking! Is it possible to please a person so utterly unreasonable, so ingeniously fastidious? Highly as I estimate the generosity, delicacy, and devotion of my own sex, I scarcely think Alice's behaviour under the circumstances could be surpassed. She is most deeply attached to you—that I know—yet she voluntarily, and in spite of yourself, gives you the fullest latitude, and thereby risks the loss of you, for how is it possible to have any reliance upon the insolence and caprice of so choice a gentleman as you are taught to consider yourself? Perhaps this is an

over refinement of generosity, for there is no reciprocity on her side! there is no danger that time will have any other effect upon her feelings than to confirm and strengthen them. Her only anxiety, then, during these six months will be for your constancy. And yet you are ungrateful and unjust enough to throw an imputation upon the motives which dictated such noble conduct. Sydenham, I have no patience with you—I had almost said you are unworthy of such a creature."

Lady Eleanor had become warm, so I hastened to soothe her displeasure, by assuring her that I spoke unadvisedly, and that I fully appreciated the part which Alice had taken. She was appeased by this explanation, and observed with truth, that it would argue me incapable of understanding the nature of a high and delicate mind, were I to doubt the motives which had influenced Miss Paulet in this affair. "I should despise myself," I observed, "did I believe it possible that I could take advantage of her magnanimity. No, the six months' probation which she inflicts, will only serve to render assurance doubly sure. I shall employ it, however, in cultivating better habits and feelings than those which, I am ashamed to say, have hitherto regulated my life; she did right, indeed, in allowing me some time to make myself a little more worthy of her."

"Now," said Lady Eleanor, "these dispositions are such as I should have expected from the better nature of Matthew Sydenham; the world only sees him in his least becoming aspect, and forms its hasty judgment from his faults, which, thank Heaven! are all on the outside. I know that you will eventually prove, both in public and private life, what your real friends and admirers wish to see you."

Nor was the pleasure which Lady Jane Paulet manifested at this fortunate event, less lively than that of her elder friend. She seemed, however, inclined to agree with me in thinking it hard, that the marriage should be deferred for six months. But accustomed as she was, to consider both her husband and his sister, perfect and infallible, she would not encourage me to persevere in pleading for a mitigation of the delay, although she did not altogether understand the necessity or expediency of it. In the fulness and simplicity of her heart, she disclosed to me how she had from the first wished for this match, as well from her own good opinion, as from perceiving her sister's predilection for me. She described the pleasure with which she had observed our growing intimacy,

and the anxiety and alarm at the unaccountable change in my conduct. She had never suspected that I had regarded Ax-ford as a rival, nor had she been made acquainted, until very lately, with the fact of his second proposal for Alice. Hence the indignation and disgust which she had displayed toward me, in consequence of ascribing the change in my manner to a design of sporting with the feelings of her sister—a practice to which she had only recently learned that I was addicted. The tenderness of her sex, and her own peculiar nature, were however deeply engaged for the disappointment of young Ax-ford, whose returning attachment to Alice she had sometimes suspected, but had never entertained any serious apprehensions of it. I myself was not without commiseration for his condition, embittered, perhaps, by the consciousness that his rival excelled him in those qualities which found favour in the eyes of his mistress. George Ax-ford was a most amiable young man, but his character was soft, and his intellect was certainly not above mediocrity. In fact he was not the sort of person to gain the regard of a girl of sense and spirit. It may be adding insult to unintentional injury, to say that I pitied him, but I regretted I should have so far given way to jealousy and contempt, as to have treated him slightly; and I wished for an opportunity of offering him my friendship. This the reader will probably say I might do without drawing much upon my magnanimity.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

By the desire of Alice, which was in conformity with my own wish, the knowledge of the relation in which we stood toward each other, was to be strictly confined to her own family and the Palmers. It is not very pleasant to go about town as a man engaged to be married: already had the rumour gone abroad somewhat to my annoyance. I determined, therefore, to give it no countenance, and if possible, to preserve the secret until a few days before the catastrophe.

Relieved from the anxious care which had deprived me of peace, and suspended my energies for some time past, I applied myself with alacrity and spirit to my several avocations. I was necessarily occupied a good deal with politics, and rather in obedience to the injunction of Alice, than from any inclination of my own, I made my appearance occasionally in those gay assemblages, where I had formerly shone the satellite of Beaumont, and but a little less than himself in magnitude and brilliancy. If I had formerly regarded the *beau monde* with contempt, that feeling was certainly not mitigated by the contrast which it presented to the higher style of society, in which I had of late mingled. Naturally disposed to scorn, and having no longer any motive to restrain me from indulging that passion, (for so in me it might at one time have almost been denominated) my demeanour became more insulting, and my sarcasms more cold and cutting than ever. Alice did wisely in desiring me to come among these people, thought I; it is right that I should entirely disgust myself with them, in order that I may more thoroughly appreciate my future prospects.

What a bitter irony does that appear to a thinking man which affixes the epithet "good" to the society of professional fashionables! The world, as these classes affect to call themselves, is a living libel upon society; for I will venture to say, that it comprises, in a greater degree than is to be found in any other description of the community; all that is base, odious, and contemptible in human nature. Insolence, ignorance, vulgarity, bigotry, envy, jealousy, vice, and mean-

ness of every variety, are to be found there in greater abundance and perfection, than in any other given sect or class, or number of persons throughout the world. But, thank Heaven ! I have done for ever with the vile crew, whose characteristic it is to despise all who are not sots like themselves. Adieu, ye demireps, who are profligate, though, ignorant of the refinements of passion; ye tribe of Metcalfes, who sell your children for gold and glitter, and ye daughters who are eager to be sold ! Farewell, ye dandies, and a word with you at parting, for ye were once my humble servants. Ye are to me, who am wont to be proud of heart, what a death's head is to a hermit, or a physician to a man in health; whenever I am disposed to think more highly of myself than I ought to think, I have only to reflect that I share the lineaments of humanity with such creatures as you, and my self-conceit is incontinently humbled. For the sake of old acquaintanceship I offer you a piece of advice. There is now in agitation a measure, the tendency of which is to produce revolution. Go down on your knees, and unceasingly pray that this measure may never pass into a law, for when the standard of utility is set up, (nay, it is already raised,) what will become of you ? for I doubt whether you will be able to find a station in the Common Wealth sufficiently degraded for your reception, or employments base enough for your capabilities. Hope not at the day of reckoning that you will be suffered to take shelter in your utter insignificance, for perhaps the splendour of hereditary rank and honour may have been tarnished in your persons, or fortune may have enabled you to abuse the advantages of wealth, or perhaps under the shelter of station or public tranquillity, you may have presumed to insult those, who, however humble, must be far superior to yourselves. A generous man may step out of his path to avoid injuring the worm, but when a crowd is pressing forward, the wretched insect must be crushed. It is true that in yourselves ye are nothing, but circumstances have enabled you to be a nuisance, and you must not expect that the passions of the many will discriminate between them and your personal insignificance. Were your miserable fates dependent solely on the master-spirits of the scene, you might rest assured of passing unnoticed.

Tremble ye, all who have set up the goddess of Folly, and have devoted yourselves to the prostitute. The time is fast approaching when your vile superstition will no longer be

tolerated. The spirit of improvement is advancing upon you, and ye must either yield to, or fly before it. There is a great cry abroad to set up the standard of merit, and expel the scoundrels and blockheads from the high places of the world, which they have too long usurped to the exclusion of the rightful owners. These are no speculative predictions, but the palpable signs of the times, which he who runs may read.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE society into which I was thrown this year by my political connexions, differed materially in character from that of which I had been a member during the last session. It had less brilliancy than that of the Whig wits, but more solidity; and owing to the change that was gradually taking place in my tastes and habits, it had more substantial attractions for me, than the feverish excitement which marked the conversation of my former associates. My new friends were likewise for the most part worthy private characters, as well as able and honest in public life, and this was now a consideration to me. They were stigmatized by their showy opponents as humdrums, and I was a good deal badgered at first, for my connexion with them, but this ridicule, like every other attempt at any period of my life to divert me from my settled purpose, passed by me like idle wind.

I shall not detail any conversation which took place at our dinners, for though they were always rational and interesting, and not without wit as well as wisdom, they chiefly related to politics, and therefore were of a nature not exceedingly palatable to my fair friends, who, I fear, are sadly disappointed, after all, by the unromantic style of my love affair, and the straight-forward matter-of-fact manner in which it is obvious it must end. I scorn indeed to deceive you by encouraging hopes of mystery and embarrassments which I cannot gratify. I feel myself already growing domestic and dull; the spell of matrimony is upon me, and Sydenham's occupation is gone!

My old friends, the Whigs, as I, who knew them well, had suspected, and as others who knew them still better, had more positively predicted, now began to show that they intended to preserve the consistency of their character by relaxing their hold of that measure, their great and last resource, which, like Fox's India Bill, if carried, must have secured to them a long lease of office; and if frustrated, must drive them disgraced, into another half century of desperate and impotent opposition. To persons who, like myself, are ad-

dicted to the study of man, it is delightful to observe this keeping in character. Had they, upon coming into power, behaved with decency and good sense, I should have been disappointed. The country has invariably despised and distrusted them; and this is no prejudice, but a judgment founded upon their conduct whenever they have been armed with power. They swagger and talk big, when their efforts are confined to empty-bullying; but give them place, and they aggravate their voices, and roar you in Bottom's vein. They have one vote for opposition, and another for office. The maxims of patriotism and liberty are ever upon their lips; but their hearts and heads are far from both. They have nothing to do with either, except theoretically; for their practice carries into extravagance and abuse the doctrines of Toryism, though with an effrontery which excites both one's laughter and indignation, they will tell you that they do not depart from their principles. They remind me of the ingenious philosopher Square, who dilates upon the "beauty of virtue and the fitness of things," and is found by his pupil *not* equivocally situated in a young lady's bedchamber. But is Square abashed by this discovery? Not a jot; for he can prove it to be perfectly consistent with the beauty of virtue and the eternal fitness of things. "True," says he, "I should have been unpardonable had I originally seduced the damsel from the paths of virtue; but when I find the thing done, am I reprehensible for obeying the dictates of nature? I cannot make the matter worse, for the ice was already broken before I came; so that I have only acted in conformity to the eternal and immutable fitness of things." In like manner argue my quondam friends, when envy or malice would detect a discrepancy between their principles and their professions. "What!" says the Whig minister, "am I to be blamed for giving to my own in preference to strangers? With whose merits should I be so well acquainted, as with those of my own kindred? and I protest that I know none better qualified to hold their several offices, than my sons, brothers, and cousins, whom I have respectively appointed to them. Who shall say, then, that I have not fully redeemed my pledge of giving only to the most worthy? True, I have clamoured for retrenchment; but if, instead of alleviating, I am obliged to add to the burdens of the country, am I to be loaded with reproaches? Consider, unreasonable man, the circumstances of the country, and lay the blame upon those who brought it into such circumstances, as to render re-

trenchment impossible *at present. Therefore,*" &c. &c. Now this is reasoned in the very spirit of the notable philosopher, celebrated by our great national novelist, and I strongly suspect that Fielding must have intended that character as an allegorical representation of the Whigs. Never had the character of the party been more satisfactorily developed and vindicated than by the present administration. With an effrontery, imbecility, and profligacy, which Whigs only could display in such prominent combination, they now, just before it was committed, signified their intention of dismembering that darling measure, upon preserving the integrity of which they had staked their personal honour, and what was of more importance, their official existence. But observe their first retrograde movement. At the commencement, they retreat in gallant style, with their faces to the enemy, at the same time stoutly denying, with ludicrous impudence, that they were retreating at all! In the beginning of the contest, they blustered about "victory or death!" and swore that they would not yield an inch of ground; now, however, when they found the day going against them, their leader intimated that though he would adhere to his pledge of "no surrender," yet, should he be hard pressed upon any point he would allow it to be taken from him "*male pertinaci.*"

So much for the Whigs. As to their subsequent acts, are they not written in the chronicles? Yes, thank heaven, they are to be found in imperishable records, otherwise I would give them a place here, for the benefit of posterity.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ONE evening when there was to be a great debate, Alice was induced to make one of a party of ladies to the roof of the House of Commons. She had never before witnessed the assembly of our collective wisdom, and such was my opinion of her good sense, acuteness, and knowledge of the world, that I felt interested to know the result of her observation upon us. The debate which took place upon this occasion, brought out the principal characteristics of the House. It lasted for six hours, and comprised speakers of every description.

The next day I asked Lady Jane how she had been *entertained*?

"Oh, very much, indeed," was her reply. I expressed doubt from her manner, that she was quite sincere, and desired that she would say what she really thought.

"Now you only want to make me say something silly, and then to despise me afterwards. I know it was all very clever, but I did not understand the question, and therefore could not appreciate it. I was like a shuttlecock during the whole time; for every speaker on both sides, convinced me alternately that his opinion was right, which of course was very absurd."

"At all events, you can tell which speech pleased you most."

"I dare say my taste will be pronounced quite wrong," answered she; "but if you will have it, I must say Lord M's. Oh, it was so eloquent! and his voice so melodious, and his attitudes so graceful! I wonder how the House could bestow so much more applause on that long speech of Mr. H. who is as hoarse as a raven, and whose only action was thumping upon the box which stood on the table before him. I see you are laughing at my opinion, but I have told you the truth, as you desired me."

It was true, indeed, that I could not suppress a smile at my fair friend's unsophisticated preference. Mr. H. whom she voted a bore, was one of the very few members of that

House, who, I could say, emphatically, spoke with the tongue of a statesman, while this Lord M. was, perhaps, the most offensive specimen of that class of members whom Burke described as being "nursed and dandled into legislators;" a young man possessed of that sort of farthing rush-light glimmering of talent, which, when it exists in plebeian minds, rarely sheds its rays beyond the poet's corner of a provincial newspaper. But being found in the heir of a noble house, is fanned, and coaxed, and nourished, and then worshipped as a star of the light of Heaven. This Lord M. was, in fact, one of my especial disgusts—the most nauseous of all the "talented youth"—a creature trained to come down to the House and thrust out his arm, spout like a parrot, and play monkey tricks of rhetoric. And then the complacency of the animal! The ape's imitations of humanity are the only comparison I can find for M.'s caricatures of eloquence, and self-pride in his exhibitions. Not content with aspiring to the honours of a statesman, this genius must needs be an author likewise. Nothing less must serve his turn but tragedy, forsooth! and a sad affair it was, indeed—too dull even for mirth! In his lighter moods, however, he would condescend to indite rhymes, which were the veritable *caus sucré* of poesy. But the ladies, I believe, in general, thought very highly of him, and even my dear little friend, Lady Jane, who was by no means a fool, was likewise disposed to be one of his admirers. "And are you also enchanted with Lord M.'s eloquence?" inquired I somewhat anxiously of Alice.

"On the contrary," answered she, "Jane and I do not agree with respect to him. Lord M.'s object seemed to be to make a speech. Now I preferred those who appeared to address themselves earnestly to the question, with the view to persuade their audience. Lord M. gave me the idea of a forward school-boy, who came forth with an oration in which he had perfected himself by frequent rehearsals."

"Well, I give him up," said Jane, "only I am sure it was intended to be all very fine, and so it imposed upon my ignorance."

"And what is your opinion of us upon the whole? Do you think we want reforming?"

"Indeed, I don't pretend to say," answered Alice; "that, perhaps, is best known to yourselves. But I should suppose that there is not, nor ever was, an assembly of the same size which included so much wisdom, information, and eloquence,

with so small an average of ignorance and folly, as the English House of Commons. It is very imposing to witness almost every side of every question so powerfully advocated. Such spirit, such enthusiasm, such brilliant collisions of talent, form a noble spectacle to my eyes. I confess I did not like the assertion of that member, who, in replying to an argument, that the proposed measure would exclude talent from the House, said, that such an effect would be a recommendation to him, because he thought that the description of persons alluded to, so far from being an acquisition, were well got rid of, for they only obstructed the public business."

"That member," I replied, "was the organ of his party; the drones and bores who make the longest speeches, and are the real impediments to the public business. It is very natural that they should wish to be free of their enemies and tyrants, of whom they stand in awe. If the House were not illumined by eloquence, it would be deprived of the essential part of that splendour and dignity, which excites the admiration, and preserves the respect of the nation; it would subside into a mere committee for the transaction of public affairs. But I utterly deny that men of great talent are merely ornaments of the House. Because their eloquence does not appear immediately to influence its decisions, shallow people cry out, 'What is the use of all this speaking? it is a waste of the public time.' These blockheads are incapable of reflecting that every view of every question is exhibited in the most forcible light to the people of England, by the efforts of the leading members, who, through the medium of the press, are the source of public opinion, which is thus no other than their own wisdom reacting upon, and governing the legislature in a new form. Very few indeed are the minds capable of comprehending great questions, and were these left to be dealt with by ordinary intellects, what contempt would be excited by their feeble attempts to reach such inaccessible topics! What a mass of temerity and prejudice would our legislature be, were not these besetting sins of ignorance and mediocrity counteracted by the light of genius and knowledge! I do not hesitate to say, that no House of Commons would preserve the respect and confidence of the country many years, after being deprived of those lights, which all experience proves, can be safely and securely admitted only by means of the close boroughs. But this is no argument to the symmetry-mongers and noisy declaimers about the rights of man, who regard political institutions in

much the same manner, as your sex generally estimate ours—more studious of external grace and proportion, than intrinsic and practical worth.”

It must not be supposed that these remarks were addressed exclusively to the ladies, although I knew that they were of a description not uninteresting to Alice, who, however, had always the good taste to withdraw from all share in the conversation, when it grew decidedly political and argumentative. But, in fact, I was speaking rather to Paulet and Trefusis, who had just entered the room. The last-mentioned person had lately come into Parliament, having filled up the vacancy in Lord Truro's borough, occasioned by the death of Cheselden. I shall not detail any part of the conversation that followed; for political disquisitions are not the province of a work of this kind, and I fear that I have already trespassed too far beyond what can be properly considered legitimate ground.

Griffes & Gates

CHAPTER XL.

DIVIDED as my thoughts and time were just now between love and politics, nothing passed particularly worthy of record. It appeared, however, that I had not yet exhausted the world of absurdities; for, calling in Grosvenor-street one morning, Lady Jane informed me, with a countenance full of humour, that if my propensities for ridicule were languishing for want of a subject, they might meet with one if I would dine there that day. Before I could make any inquiry as to these promised lions, Alice, though not altogether able herself to suppress a smile, gently reproved her lively sister for stimulating my expectations on such a subject, and gave me to understand, that she alluded to Lord Truro, his wife, and her family, who had just come to town, and were to dine with them that day.

"I would rather," said she, "that you never saw them at all, but as that is scarcely possible, you may as well meet them to-day as any other time. The truth must be owned, that my uncle has made a very unsuitable match. Lady Truro and her family have, in fact, exceeded our expectations, which you know were not very favourable; but I am sure I need not remind you that St. Leger would be annoyed by your appearing to notice their failings, upon which he has never made any remark even to us."

"I'm so glad, Alice, he was not in the room yesterday when they called," said Jane, "for I really could hardly keep my countenance. I'm afraid they must have observed the restraint I put upon myself."

"I don't think you need suffer much remorse on that account," answered her sister; "for fortunately, or unfortunately, I don't know which to call it, persons whose defects are very gross are seldom conscious of them, I believe; but pray, my dear, be guarded for St. Leger's sake."

"Indeed, I'll do my best, Alice, to be composed, but Mrs. Cleghorn is almost too much for human gravity. I only

implore you, Sydenham, not to look towards me while they are here, for if you do I shall be quite overpowered."

"You teach me to anticipate something very delightful," said I. "Is there any other besides My Lady and her mamma?"

"O yes!" cried Jane, with a look and tone of humorous horror; "worse, if possible, remains behind; there's a brother and sister."

"Indeed! and what are they all like, in Heaven's name?"

"Oh, I can give you no idea of them; they must be seen and heard. But the mother is the best, or the worst, as I suppose Alice would say. They are all excellent and different. She is a perfect monster of vulgarity; and my aunt is *fine*; the sister servile, and the brother—I'm sure I hardly know what—a sort of dandy-savage."

"This is a rich treat indeed; but Alice may be assured that I will enjoy it in silence."

"Do, pray. It is useless to defend them, for they are utterly absurd; but St. Leger, you know, cannot pass them off as a jest."

Time was when I should have anticipated the exhibition of these originals with exquisite *goût*; nor will I affect to say that my relish for such entertainments was materially diminished; but I can safely assert, that I no longer permitted myself recklessly to inflict pain upon persons who were unfortunate by nature or education. In baiting folly or affectation, however, I had as keen an enjoyment as ever.

With the lively expectation, therefore, of being a good deal amused, from the description that Jane had given me of these people, I returned to dinner in Grosvenor-street. I found the Truro party already in the drawing-room, and it was with obvious difficulty that Lady Jane could summon sufficient self-command to introduce me to them. They were indeed a deplorable set. The Marchioness herself was distinguished from the other members of her family by the extra richness of her dress. She evidently did not sit easy under her new honours, not indeed from want of self-confidence, but because she had just discrimination enough to perceive that the sphere of society into which she had been raised was exceedingly different from that which she had quitted. The mother was indeed a monster—a huge mass of disgusting mortality, so gross as to be beyond ridicule, and to turn one's stomach. The sister, Miss Penelope Cleghorn, was a good

specimen of a low Irish Miss; dressy, forward, and vulgar. The brother was a most outrageous creature. Sir Patrick Molony, Beaumont's favourite baronet, was a fool to him. The Baronet was unsophisticated, he assumed nothing, but here was a grotesque and spurious kind of dandyism engrafted upon the native animal. At first I did not know what to make of him, but after some observation, I discovered his object:—it was to be a beau. Jane's description of him was, I believe, the best—a dandy-savage.

Lord Truro was such a very gentleman-like person—he had so much of *the Paulet* in his manner, that any one who was ignorant of mankind would have been at a loss to understand how he could have connected himself with such a set; but, accustomed as I was every day to witness the most incongruous alliances, to me there was nothing very astonishing in this affair. Lord Truro had in his youth been much admired for his grace and beauty; it appeared that this was peculiarly his weak side, and I was not long in discovering that he had not otherwise much strength to guard against any attacks made thereupon. These people had, no doubt, a sufficiency of low cunning; he was alone, and advanced in life; they had of course laid siege to him with a storm of flattery, and he probably became an easy conquest.

Paulet, however, treated them with perfect courtesy; his beautiful and graceful wife, for his sake, bore with them; and Alice, always correct and considerate, was not deficient in attention. At first they were rather cowed by the consciousness of their being so entirely out of place, but, after a time, native impudence relieved them from this embarrassment, and they shone forth in their real colours.

I need, perhaps, scarcely say that there was no addition to the party at dinner, for Paulet had too much respect for his uncle and his own family, to invite any stranger to laugh at his new connexions.

These dreadful people could not eat their dinner even, without betraying the beast. They all fed with the knife, except when a sudden recollection, or a significant look from Lord Truro would remind either of them of instructions, which it was obvious, from such glances, that they had received beforehand, with respect to their behaviour, but habit in general asserted its predominance. The old woman, indeed, seemed quite incorrigible, for she used the weapon aforesaid with such rash security, that Lady Jane cast a half-fearful

glance at me, as Mrs. Cleghorn drew the blade from her mouth, lest she should cut herself from ear to ear; but of this there was no apprehension, for the old lady had too much practice. I should be suspected of exaggeration were I to detail all the irregularities of the parent savage, but I shall never forget the astonished countenance of the servant, when she asked for "A cut of bread, young man." As for Jane, she was obliged to put her handkerchief to her mouth, and even Alice could with difficulty suppress a smile; her son-in-law blushed, but Paulet was imperturbable. Fortunately I could always preserve a perfect command over my features.

Dinner ended, and the ladies withdrawn, the savage, who had been rather *shy* in the presence of Jane and Alice, began to evince a desire of taking a lead in the conversation. Politics being the theme of the day, Lord Truro made some indifferent remarks relative thereto; the savage uttered a contrary opinion with such fierceness of language, as must almost have been considered personal, had it proceeded from an individual acquainted with and amenable to the laws of good breeding. No notice being taken of what he said, he proceeded in the same style, until Lord Truro, provoked and ashamed at the outrageousness of the creature, found it expedient to take upon himself the office of keeper, and rebuked him in sharp terms, which caused the following rejoinder.—

"Sure, I'm only expressing my opinion, my Lord, and there's no *harrum* in that. I'd like to know what gentleman would say the contrary?" he added with an air of defiance.

"I fear, Sir," observed I, "that this country is not quite so free as that fortunate island of which you are a native. I fancy many things might be both said and done there which would not be tolerated here."

"Mr. Cleghorn," said Paulet, "I'll trouble you to pass the white wine."

The savage did as he was requested, at the same time looking rather bewildered, as if he did not understand what I said, and therefore suspected that it contained material for a quarrel.

"Devil take me, if I know!" answered he resolutely, after a pause; "but I'll spake my opinion out manfully wherever I may be, that will I, 'faith, for I'm afraid of no man."

Lord Truro blushed with shame and anger, and without taking any further notice of his untamed connexion, proposed that we should join the ladies, and left the room. I followed his example, and as I went up stairs I heard the savage behind murmuring and menacing audibly at the disrespectful treatment he had met with.

What passed further that evening I know not, for having spoken a word to Alice, I went down to the House.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE reader will easily believe, that my desire to become acquainted with the anonymous writer who had made such a malignant attempt to mar the happiness of Alice and myself had, now that his base design was exposed and frustrated, dwindled into a mere matter of curiosity. I had set it down in my own mind as proceeding rather from petty female malice than deliberate villany, and in fact, had nearly forgotten the circumstance, when I was reminded of it by an occurrence, which I must relate.

I was walking one day through an obscure street in the neighbourhood of Marylebone, when I perceived on the opposite side of the way, a little in advance of myself, a person whose appearance attracted my particular attention. The profile of this man strongly resembled my uncle, although the lip was free from the moustaches, which the latter had worn when he left Sydenham; the dress was shabby, as if with a view to disguise, but the step and mein could hardly be mistaken. That I might observe without being observed, I slackened my pace, and crossed over to the same side with the stranger. I followed him quietly, until he turned down a street to the right, but in so doing, he cast behind a glance which was arrested by my person, for on seeing me, he suddenly hurried forward. This movement confirmed my suspicion; I pressed after him, but upon turning into the street where he disappeared, I found that I had lost him. He must have gone into one of the houses, and my first impulse was to call at each, and inquire if such a person lodged there. But upon consideration, I abandoned this purpose, which, if successful, could be productive of no probable effect, for how could I speak to my scoundrel relative, or what excuse could I make for concerning myself in his affairs? Nevertheless I felt exceedingly desirous to know what he was doing in London, where he was evidently *incog*. That it boded no good, to myself especially, I could not but feel a strong presentiment, and the anonymous letter immediately recurred to me. While at Sydenham he frequently betrayed the strongest

repugnance to the idea of my marrying, and never omitted an opportunity of endeavouring to create in me a contempt and abhorrence of the blessed condition of matrimony, to which, in the abstract, I certainly had no great inclination.

Instead, therefore, of calling at every house on a fool's errand to inquire if Mr. Sydenham lodged there, I contented myself with taking the name of the street and sending for one of the ferrets of the police, whom I had in my pay, having sometimes occasion to employ him for political purposes. To this ferret, whom I knew to be vigilant, faithful, and persevering, I communicated certain particulars relative to a certain person, desiring him to obtain all possible information respecting the present situation, proceedings, connections, and views of that person. My trusty ferret nodded and winked, asked no unnecessary question, and promised to use despatch and his best talents in this service.

In a few days, my emissary reported progress. The individual was living in a house of bad reputation. He occupied the first floor, and underneath was a low hell. He passed by the name of Bayley. His principal associates, according to the observations of my spy, were a foreigner, and a young man of the name of Burgess, who lived in Craven street, Strand. I was startled by the latter name, and desired a particular description of the owner's person. He was tall, raw-boned, and confident in his address; a cocked-up nose, greenish eyes, straight black hair, and sallow complexion; age twenty or thereabouts. This description exactly corresponded with my friend the vicar's son!

My determination was instantly taken. I had promised Burgess to take some notice of his son in London; this promise, my engagements had hitherto afforded me no opportunity of performing, which I fully intended, from respect and regard for the old man. I should, therefore, have a good excuse for calling at the young gentleman's lodgings.

I paid him a visit accordingly, but was told that he was not within. In the evening I sent to invite him to dinner the following day. He came, and nothing was more obvious, as there were but few topics in common between us, than that I should turn the conversation upon himself and his pursuits. To all my inquiries, his answers were of such a kind as to give me to understand that he was almost exclusively devoted to his studies. It required but little penetration to see that the lad was playing the hypocrite. His raw, low cunning could hardly deceive me. I had considerable difficulty,

nevertheless, in coming to the point, at which I was aiming, without alarming his suspicions, if there was anything wrong, as was most probable, in his connection with my uncle. In the first place I was not informed whether he knew him as my relative, or only under his assumed name of Bayley. My second difficulty was how to extract from him anything farther than a confirmation of the fact of his acquaintance with that person. I affected to take a great interest in his concerns, desired to know who were his companions, and what were their characters? Accordingly they were enumerated and described, with rather more freedom, than he had as yet permitted himself, which I attribute to the familiarity of my manner, and the wine with which I had pressed him. Still not a word about this Bayley, so that after *pumping*, and *beating about the bush*, as the phrase is, I was obliged to give up the hope of making him explicit. I dismissed him therefore with a token of my regard in the shape of a bank note for 20l. which the young man pocketed with much alacrity.

Although I had thus failed in my attempt to draw out young Burgess, I did not consider my interview with him to have been altogether unavailing, for as he had professed to give me an account of all his connections in London, the silence which he had preserved with respect to Bayley or Sydenham, in whichever character he might know him, was a convincing proof that there was something sinister in his connection with that individual. Indeed, what object could such a man as my uncle propose to himself, in associating with this lad, but mischief? I cross-examined my spy upon this subject, and he persisted in his former report, which left no doubt upon my mind as to the identity both of Burgess and my uncle. I instructed the man, therefore, to continue his observations upon the proceedings of these individuals, and especially those of the latter.

A few days after the above detailed discovery, an incident occurred which I could not but consider closely connected therewith. I had gone to the play to see a new actress of celebrity, and was sitting on the back bench when a man in moustaches, looking like a foreigner, entered the box, and, in seating himself, brushed down my hat, which was beside me. Although he made no apology for the accident, it never occurred to me to suspect that he meant to be impertinent, and therefore I quietly lifted my hat, and replaced it. Occupied with the business of the stage, I had forgotten this incident, and the presence of the person who had occasioned it, when Colonel

Trefusis, who had accompanied me to the theatre, and sat just before me, requested that I would keep his place while he was absent for a few minutes. Accordingly I laid my hat upon his seat, but no sooner had he left the box, than the stranger aforesaid put his leg over the bench, and made a motion going to remove my hat, with the view to place himself in his stead. I informed him with perfect civility that the seat was engaged by my friend, who was returning to it immediately. "There is no keeping seats here," answered the man rudely, and in a foreign accent, at the same time displacing my hat.

"What the rule of the place may be, Sir, I know not," was my reply, "but the rule of courtesy which prevails among gentlemen would protect my friend's place from intrusion during his temporary absence. If you are not amenable to that rule, I suppose I cannot prevent you taking possession of the unoccupied seat." So saying I removed my hat.

"What, Sir!" cried the man, "do you mean say I am no the gentleman?"

"I don't know what you are," I replied, "but judging from your behaviour, I should suppose that you are not a gentleman."

The fellow here said something very scurrilous, which put a stop to the altercation, and a gentleman, sitting in front, who had observed what had taken place, said that the fellow ought to be turned out of the box, and begged that I would not think of taking notice of his insolence, as he had no doubt that he was a blackguard.

These proceedings were beginning to attract notice, so I handed my card to the gentleman who had interposed, and desiring the foreigner to follow me if he had anything to say, I quitted the box. They both took the hint, and followed me into the lobby, where we were met, much to my satisfaction, by Colonel Trefusis. The gentleman aforesaid, who had handed me his card in exchange for mine, then detailed what had taken place, and put it to Trefusis, whether this person was entitled to the treatment of a gentleman. My friend concurred with him in deciding that no notice could be taken of him. Hereupon the foreigner began to bluster, and talk about posting and horsewhipping, when Trefusis cut him short by saying—

"Produce a certificate that you are a gentleman, and Sir Matthew Sydenham shall give you the satisfaction of one. Refer me to any person of station in society who will vouch

for your respectability, and you shall be dealt with accordingly!"

The man now *lowered his tone to one of high indignation*. Produce a certificate! Refer, indeed! He would not condescend to any such things. He was a gentleman, and could adduce proof enough if he thought it worth his while. He had been infamously used. So speaking, and muttering threats, he walked away in great heat.

"I wonder who the devil the fellow is, and what was his meaning in attempting to pick a quarrel with you?" said my stranger friend, who took occasion to inform us that he was an Irish gentleman, and that he had come up to town upon business: "I've a notion that I've seen his face before, and that, too, not in a very reputable place."

I requested him to be more explicit, and accordingly he frankly confessed that he had a strong recollection of having seen this very person in a gambling house in——Street, Marylebone, into which he had been tempted a few nights before, "where," said he, "I lost my good seventy pounds to one of the most gentlemanly looking fellows, that ever lived by his wits." I eagerly inquired what sort of a person!

"Why, do you know anything of him? 'Faith begging your pardon for making such a comparison, I don't know but he had a look of yourself, Sir Matthew, though he was taller and older-looking."

This was, no doubt, my uncle: I did not, however, choose to acknowledge that I knew anything of such a person, so I evaded his inquiry, and thanking him for his friendly interposition, wished him good evening, professing my intention to take an early opportunity of paying him my respects.

CHAPTER XLII.

I HAD NOW gathered a train of circumstances, which clearly implied a design on the part of my uncle to annoy, at least, if not to do me serious mischief. That the anonymous letters, which had for their object the breaking off the supposed match between Miss Paulet and myself, emanated from him, I had now no doubt; he had always evinced a strong repugnance to the idea of my marrying, although in the course of nature, he had no right to expect to derive any benefit from my continuing a bachelor. The person who had attempted to engage me in a quarrel at the theatre, and the foreigner, whom my spy had observed in the company of Mr. Sydenham, were evidently identical. It was not unreasonable to infer that this man had been employed by him to insult me with the view of hazarding my life, for of what iniquity was not my uncle capable? He was as pretty a villain as ever figured in tragedy or romance.

To sit down passively under this annoyance, and even bodily apprehension, was not possible, but it was difficult to decide upon any method of releasing myself from it. After some consideration I thought it as well to proceed in a straightforward manner, and accordingly I wrote my uncle the following letter.

"MR. BAYLEY,—You will immediately know who the writer of this is, as well as he knows who you are. I have had my eye upon you for some time, and am acquainted with as many of your proceedings as would enable me to deal with you in a summary and effectual manner, but you will easily understand my disinclination to expose you publicly, unless your machinations against myself personally, (of all which, direct or indirect, I am perfectly aware,) should oblige me to resort to that final measure. I appeal to you by your self-interest, through which alone you are accessible, whether you can propose to yourself any safe and probable advantage by pursuing your present course? You cannot benefit yourself by injuring me. Should you even take my life, (such is

my opinion of your talents, I believe you might accomplish it, without appearing to be connected with the murder,) I should leave behind me documents which would deprive you of the object to be gained by my death. Be governed then by reason. Quit this country immediately, and for ever, and my agent shall receive directions to pay to yours the sum of two hundred pounds half-yearly, *during my life, and your continuance abroad*. Understand that I propose this as an alternative to public disgrace and irretrievable ruin.

"You cannot deceive me. That you may have well-grounded confidence in your own abilities I admit, but you know likewise, that you have not a fool to deal with. This will be delivered to you by a sure hand. I give you twenty-four hours for your answer, which if I receive not within that time, I shall interpret your silence as a refusal of my offer, and an acceptance of the alternative, and take measures accordingly, forthwith.

M. S."

Notwithstanding the firmness with which this letter was written, I felt exceedingly anxious about its effect. Relying upon the terrors which his guilty conscience would conjure up, and upon his knowledge of the firmness of my character, I had talked big about evidence which, in point of fact, I did not possess, and even had it been within my reach, I should have felt extremely reluctant to take advantage of it, for it is not pleasant to proclaim one's father's brother as an infamous scoundrel.

On the following morning, soon after breakfast, I was informed that a person of the name of Hawkins wished to speak with me upon business which he could only communicate to myself. Though unacquainted with the name announced, visits from strangers were not so unusual with me as to excite suspicion, and I desired that the man should be shown in. Accordingly, a person shabbily dressed, with fierce red hair and prodigious whiskers of the same hue, was ushered into the room. As soon as the servant retired, the stranger, whose full face had not been yet presented to me, turned round, and by an act of Ledgerdemain, as it appeared, was instantly divested of his red hair and whiskers, and stood confessed, —my uncle!

Had Mr. Hawkins turned out to be Satan, I do not think that I should have been so very much terrified; for I have an idea, that there is a good deal of ill-nature prevalent about the Devil, and that he is, upon the whole, rather a good sort

of fellow ; but here stood before me a mortal man, who, as far as my experience went, had gone to the utmost extent of iniquity that his human nature would permit, and who seemed to unite in himself, all the qualities, which popular prejudice ascribes to the personage above-mentioned.

I will confess it then, I certainly did recoil, when I suddenly found myself in the presence of Colonel Sydenham ; but such emotions with me are transient ; I soon recovered myself sufficiently to express in terms, my surprise and displeasure at his appearance.

"You have," said I, "exceeded my expectations. I never could have dreamed that your effrontery would bring you voluntarily and unnecessarily to face me. My letter required a written answer, and that alone will I receive ; so pray resume your hair and whiskers and retire, for I will hold no personal conference with you."

"Believe me I did not come here to trifle, or to be trifled with," returned he, "nor should I ever wantonly come across you ; but your letter, Matthew, requires my personal answer, and that alone shall it have." So saying, with an air of cool determination he seated himself.

"I tell you, I'll have nothing to say to you personally ; begone, or I'll disgrace you before the servants."

My uncle's cadaverous face grew more deathly white at these words, and he rose from his chair, but instead of moving towards the door, stepped close up to myself, and, plucking his hand from his bosom, thrust at my face ; but involuntarily drawing my head back from the meditated blow, as I supposed, I found myself covered by a very small pistol, held about six inches from my face, on the full cock, and my uncle's tremulous finger hovering upon the hair trigger, in a manner which put me into a cold sweat.

"Attempt to move, or make any cry, and I will blow your brains to hell !" said my uncle, in a vehement whisper.

"What is your purpose ? Do you intend to commit murder ? What do you mean ?"

"Surrender those documents in your possession, by which you say you are enabled to blast my character. Give them up, or I'll be the death of you."

"Well, take away that pistol, and we'll see what's to be done. Don't attempt to humbug me with any nonsense about blowing my brains out, though in your nervous state, your finger may touch the trigger. You are not such a fool as to swing, for the mere sake of revenge."

My uncle lowered the instrument of death, and returned it to the half-cock.

"I do not want your blood," said he, "but you know not, neither do I, what a desperate man may be hurried into; so don't trifle with me, Matthew. I'm in that state of mind and circumstances, that I CANNOT be trifled with. Give me those documents, and I will communicate with you, by letter, with respect to the other matters."

"The documents you require are not in my actual possession; they are only available, in case of necessity."

"Matthew, I can depend upon your word; give me your honour that you will procure and surrender them to me without reserve."

"I shall promise nothing of the kind; you are losing labour. Those evidences shall never be forthcoming if you behave yourself, and I solemnly assure you that I will never breathe a syllable of your conduct to me in particular, or against your character in general, provided you quietly quit the country, and accept the offer I made you. I will allow you 400*l.* a-year, and give you 1000*l.* in ready money; so let us have no more of these tragedy antics of pistols and daggers; and pray let me be relieved from your farther presence as quickly as possible."

Colonel Sydenham paused a few seconds.

"Make the one thousand ten, and the four hundred five, and I will never see you again."

I hesitated at first at this exorbitant demand, but, upon a moment's reflection, I thought it better to acquiesce, and get rid of him.

"You know," I replied, "that I care little about money, and therefore you fancy that you may press me with confidence upon this point. However, I consent. I shall immediately forward for your signature an instrument, by which I bind myself to allow you 1000*l.* per annum as long as you continue abroad. The sum of 1000*l.* I will give you in hand, but not a shilling more. This is my ultimatum; I will have no farther negotiation with you of any kind."

Colonel Sydenham attempted to remonstrate, but I repeated my irrevocable determination with such an air, as gave him to understand that it was in vain to expostulate. Accordingly he re-assumed his disguise, and took his leave, to my infinite satisfaction.

CHAPTER XLIII.

I LOST no time in transmitting to my uncle the instrument referred to in the last chapter. The document was returned, in like manner, without delay, with his signature duly affixed thereto, and accompanied by a note, in which the writer informed me that he took his farewell of London that evening, and that he quitted English ground for ever, by the first packet that sailed after he reached Dover. He *apologized* (for the haughty and indifferent language which he used, could scarcely be considered an expression of contrition) for the trouble he had given me, and assured me that I might be free from all apprehension in future, as I should never be reminded of his existence, except by the half-yearly demands of his agent upon my banker. There was no tone of hostility in the letter, neither was there any attempt to excuse his conduct. It was altogether heartless and hardened.

Relieved as my mind now was of apprehension from this quarter, I perceived no obstacle to my happiness, except the period of time which was to intervene before my union with Alice.

It was about a month after the circumstances recently detailed, that I was walking in Piccadilly, when whom should I meet, but Burgess, the worthy vicar!

"My good friend!" I exclaimed with unrestrained surprise, "can I believe my eyes? what in the name of common-sense has brought you to town?"

The good man returned my greeting with kindness, but his manner was singularly dejected and embarrassed. His dress, likewise, which was never remarkably spruce, was as disordered as his countenance. His black quaint clothes were covered with dust, his linen was abominable, and his beard showed like a field of corn newly reaped. He was that sort of figure, which sharpers, at a glance, mark for their own. He strode manfully on, however, unconscious of the stares which his extraordinary appearance drew upon him from the passers, many of whom stopped, and looked round to laugh at him.

When he came up to me, the poor man seemed ready to sink with exhaustion. He took off his queer canonical-quaker hat, and with the red handkerchief contained in the crown thereof, wiped away the filthy consistence which perspiration had formed with dust in his furrowed features. This done, he was proceeding to enter into a detail of his business in London.

Now, though I hope and believe I am freer from folly than most men, and though from the high rank which I held in the gay world, I could do things, which less distinguished persons dared not venture upon, it certainly does require large philosophy, considerable strength of mind, and great *power*, to talk to, far more to walk with, a quiz, in the height of the season, at the hour of four p. m., the scene being that confluence, where St. James's street and Bond street pour their tributary streams into Piccadilly. Much, therefore, as I respected and esteemed the excellent clergyman, I would that we had met at any other time, and in any other place, or that we had never met. My first impulse was, I am ashamed to confess, to disengage myself from him forthwith. But by a struggle I overcame this weakness—"Is it worthy," thought I, "of the friend of Paulet, and the betrothed of his sister? No; I will be great," and to guard against the possibility of relapse, I thrust my arm at once, and boldly within that of Burgess. To my dismay, he led me round the corner of Bond-street.

"Stop!" cried I, suiting the action to the word, "where the devil are you going? I had not bargained for this."

"I am going to King street, Marylebone," answered the poor innocent.

"This is Bond street, St. James's, my good friend, for Heaven's sake don't come here." So saying, and without farther parley, I forced him into a hackney-coach, jumped in myself, and desired the man to drive to the place that Burgess had mentioned.

Being thus in a place of safety, I could unaffectedly express my pleasure at seeing the good vicar, and inquire, with real concern, how long he had been in London, and what had brought him there.

"I travelled all last night, my dear Sir Matthew," was his reply, "and I have been walking about all day."

"I hope upon no unpleasant business?" said I, attentively perusing his countenance, in which, dirt and fatigue seemed

to be blended with care. He answered in the negative, but his manner denied the assertion.

"Oh, no, it is nothing unpleasant; I can't say that it is anything agreeable either; my poor boy has not been going on quite so steadily as I could wish, but he's a mere child; I'm an old fool; it was to be expected."

"Have you seen your son?"

He had not. He had called at his lodgings in the Strand, whither he had repaired immediately upon quitting the coach, but had been informed there, that the young gentleman had removed to the street in Marylebone to which we were driving. He had then gone to the office of the special pleader, where he had understood that his son was prosecuting his profession, but there he was told, to his surprise, that no such person was known. This puzzled him extremely, and he made every conjecture but the only one which a less partial and more practised person would have suggested. He had been warned by a friend, whose eye had been upon his son, that the young man was not going on quite right, and recommended him to come up without loss of time. The letter containing this alarming intelligence, had been received on Wednesday, and accordingly the good man, in the greatest anxiety, though he would not admit that he had any probable cause for it, had put himself into the coach the same evening, and upon arriving in London, had proceeded immediately, without taking any refreshment, in search of his son. Mr. Burgess was a stranger in London, and had been walking about in all directions after the street in which his son lived, having evidently been misdirected by the people of whom he had inquired his way. The poor man could now hardly speak from fatigue and hunger, and the anxiety of hope deferred. In vain I tried to persuade him to stop a few minutes at a cook's shop and recruit his exhausted nature. He declared he could neither eat nor rest until he had seen his son.

On being set down at the house, which was in a shabby, suspicious-looking street, the woman who opened the door, answered our inquiry, whether Mr. Burgess lived there, with a hesitating affirmative, but would not say whether he was at home or not, until she went to see. The father's impatience could not await her return, so we followed her up stairs, until she halted at the second floor, and we entered the room before our harbingeress could do much more than announce the names, which my single-minded companion had given, before I could suggest the expediency of withholding them.

Our unexpected presence was evidently anything but welcome. Before we made our appearance, I could overhear the hurried whisper and the confusion which the announcement had caused, and the young man had scarcely time to pull an open book before him, and throw himself into a position of deep study, before we entered. In his haste, he had opened the book at the wrong end: this little mistake was, however, observed, I believe, only by myself. But a pack of dirty cards which he had in his precipitation thrust behind the cushion of a still dirtier sofa, was too palpable to escape notice, as likewise was an empty bottle, a card upon the table inscribed "Miss Belinda St. Clair, 21, Frith-street, Soho," and other signs of low debauchery.

Our youth, however, who was gifted with considerable powers of impudence, was perfectly composed in his own person; indeed, he affected to be so much absorbed by the topay-turvy volume which was spread before him, that he was not, for a moment, conscious of our presence, when lifting his eyes with an expression of astonishment and delight, (under cover of which he snatched up a letter which lay upon the table, and dexterously conveyed it into his pocket,) ran to embrace his father, from whose eyes the tears fell fast as he clasped his darling to his breast, uttering only the affectionate epithets, "My dear, dear child!" It was a minute or two before the outpourings of affection were over, and the doting parent returned to a sense of the cause which had brought him to London. He then adverted to it, mildly diluting every strong term he used with some word of kindness, although he had promised, in conformity with my advice, to speak roundly on the subject. The cunning lad saw his father's weakness, and took diligent and dexterous advantage of it. He acknowledged, with a fair semblance of contrition, that he had been thoughtless and imprudent, and that he had spent more money than he ought, but this arose from his ignorance of London, and an erroneous estimate of his expenses, but he would in future be strictly frugal, for he could never forgive himself for distressing his father.

"Say no more about it, my boy," answered his father, "but let me know how much you are in debt, and I will pay it to the last shilling; you shall not want, Tom, if I sell the coat off my back. I knew," added he exultingly, "I should find you at home, and hard at study, though they would have persuaded me that you were deceiving your poor father; but I knew you could not deceive me,—could you, Tom?"

Here Tom protested, and his father took up the book, with which his son had professed to have been engaged, when we so suddenly broke in upon his privacy.

"Why, what have we here, child?—this is no law book, surely?" cried Mr. Burgess with some surprise, after having put on his spectacles and examined the volume; "The Memoires of the Chevalier Faublas!"

"O no, Sir," answered the young man, with a face as red as fire, for though he might gull his father, he knew that he could not overreach me, "it is a trumpery novel, I suppose—I don't know what. They gave it to me at the circulating library where I occasionally get books, at a penny the volume, being advised to read something light now and then, by way of relaxation from my severer studies."

"Oh, very right, very proper, there can be no possible objection to that," returned the good vicar, laying down the book, with the infamous notoriety of which he was evidently unacquainted. But I took care to give the young gentleman a significant look, and his eye quailed beneath mine.

Burgess then asked his son to explain how it was that they had denied all knowledge of him at Mr. Price's the pleader's, where he had called. Mr. Thomas, who was always ready, answered that there were several Prices in the law, and that, from his description, it was evident that he had gone to the wrong person. The Price to whom he belonged, was just then in the country, having been summoned to the death-bed of his mother. Strange to say, this account was satisfactory. What passed farther at this interview, I cannot say, for finding myself *de trop*, I took my leave, Burgess having promised to call on me the following day, being obliged to leave London on Saturday, that he might be ready to attend to his professional duties, on the ensuing Sabbath.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE share of this life's care and disappointment which had fallen to the lot of poor Burgess, was one that came home keenly to his heart. He was destined to experience the acute misery of having a thankless and worthless child. He called upon me the following day, before he had been acquainted with the worst part of his misfortune. He had then ascertained that his son's business must necessarily detain him in London, and therefore with great reluctance, and for the first time since he had been entrusted with it, he was obliged to delegate his sacred duties, during his absence, to a stranger. The heartless and profligate youth had contracted debts to the amount of between three and four hundred pounds, which he knew that his father could not discharge without subjecting himself and his other children to long and cruel privations. Notwithstanding, the good man was determined to answer these demands, at whatever sacrifice. "He would not suffer a stigma to attach to his boy, just entering upon life; he would pay the money, and he owned that what grieved him more even than Tom's great improvidence was, his suggesting to him that there were no legal claims for the debts, he being a minor, when they were contracted. But this was a mere thoughtless expression; he knew that his son's sentiments were not of that description. He had been very improvident certainly, but he was very young, and London was a very wicked place. He only humbly prayed God, that his boy's heart was not corrupted, and he was sure it was not; this lesson just setting out in life, might be an awful warning to, and the salvation of him. After all, no blame could attach to the boy; it was his fault for launching his youth and inexperience amid the dangerous shoals of London. It was his folly to expect impossibilities. But he would take him back to the country for a year or two, and then he would be older and wiser, and his principles would be confirmed. It always so turned out in every transaction of life from the highest to the lowest, he had remarked, the

more haste the worse speed. The boy was young enough; there would be no time lost."

Thus did the good man extract consolation from his misfortunes. I strongly applauded his intention of withdrawing his son immediately from London, and compelled him to accept a draft upon my banker for the amount of his son's debts. I do not mention this out of ostentation, for every favour is to be estimated according to the value you place upon it; and I never regarded money, in any other point of view, than a means. At the same time, my habits though liberal were not extravagant, and as my expenses had always fallen considerably short of my income, I had a good deal of ready money, which enabled me occasionally to do things like the present, somewhat, I must own, to my inward satisfaction, although, as my incomparable Alice said, there is no unbecoming self-praise in assuming freedom from any vice, which want of benevolence is to be considered. Therefore, when I had money for which I had not even any personal use, however small might be the merit of appropriating it to the need of a fellow-creature, great would have been the baseness of withholding it. Burgess, who had no worldly pride, after hesitating a little from a sense of delicacy, gladly and gratefully accepted my reiterated offer, and I had the gratification of dismissing the worthy soul with a cheerful countenance, and a light heart.

This feeling, however, as the reader, from what has already been disclosed respecting young Burgess, must expect me to add, was of short duration. He soon discovered that his son had been practising a system of duplicity, and a series of knaveries, which could be suggested only by a naturally bad, and utterly depraved disposition. Among various other deceptions and villanies, he found to his deep dismay, that the money, which in his fondness and single-minded confidence he had entrusted to the young man to gain him admittance to the pleader's office, in which he was to learn his profession, had been otherwise appropriated! Thus was the mystery of Mr. Price's ignorance explained. But worse remains behind. The old man called to pay his respects to the Paullets; and Lady Jane, who was the only one in the family he saw, told him of my intended marriage with her sister-in-law; and the whole history of that business, not omitting the anonymous letters which were in her possession, and which she showed him. *What was his horror, when in these documents he recognized the handwriting of his son!* He examined them

minutely, over and over again, with agonized attention, but every particular confirmed his sense of the dreadful truth. Lady Jane, shocked at what she had unwittingly done, and overpowered by the spectacle of the misery, which the astounding discovery had produced, could only weep bitterly. It was long before this relief was afforded the unhappy old man. He laid down the dreadful letters, she said, and covering his face with his hands, groaned as if his spirit was about to quit his body, and after a long interval, the tears rolled slowly down his cheeks. The dear, kind-hearted Jane described with glistening eyes, the old man's grief as the most affecting sight she had ever witnessed; and it was with difficulty, that I could persuade her out of the remorse which she felt for having been the innocent means of making him acquainted with his misfortune.

The last mentioned fact I first learned from Lady Jane, some days after Burgess had communicated to me the pecuniary embarrassments of his son. Not having seen him in the interval, I had concluded that he had returned to the country, but, having understood that he was still in London, I lost no time in finding him out, and offering him any farther consolation or assistance that might remain in my power. I could understand what were his reasons for not calling upon me; grief and shame had, no doubt, kept him away.

Accordingly I made out his lodging, which was in the neighbourhood of Holborn. He was at home when I called; and assuredly, I must have possessed that callous heart, for which I was reputed, could I have looked unmoved upon the spectacle of misery which this worthy man presented. The sorrows of grey hairs are, of all others, the most affecting. Poets and romancers may charm us with highly seasoned pictures of the cares and distresses which appertain to youth and luxury, but the spectacle of old age suffering under the weight of substantial misfortune, engages my interest more sensibly, than the finest love-story in any of its thousand variations. The change which had taken place in Burgess's appearance, since his arrival in London, was powerfully striking. From his peaceful and contented life in the country, from which he had not been absent so much, I believe, as a week during the last thirty years, he had been hurried up to London, and from the moment of his arrival there, had enjoyed scarcely an hour's rest of mind or body, but every day had harassed him with an additional care, worse than the evil of its predecessor. When I found him at his humble

lodging, he was lying down, to court a short respite from his troubles. Finding him in this situation, I would have retired, but he did not permit me. As he rose to receive me, I observed that sorrow had indeed marked him for her own. His cheeks were sunken, and his eyes seemed scarcely to belong to a living man. I could with difficulty understand what he said, his voice was so low, and his articulation so indistinct. The last week seemed to have added at least ten years to his age, and I have no doubt had taken so much from his life.

For some moments, he could not summon resolution to allude to the painful subject. At length he said :

"Sir Matthew, if you had known all, you could never again have condescended to notice me. My noble, generous Sir, what will you say when you know—"

"My good friend," said I, interrupting him, and giving him confidence by a warm pressure of the hand, "I *do* know all, but that, be assured, can make no alteration in my friendly feelings towards you ; on the contrary, it increases them, for now you have more need of sympathy. There are great allowances to be made for the young man, who, I fear, fell into very bad hands. I have reason to know that he was acquainted with one individual who, I believe, is only excelled by the devil himself."

"God bless you, my good Sir Matthew !" cried Burgess, "for not entirely condemning my poor boy : he is bad enough ; I don't attempt to say anything in his favour, but I hope and believe his wickedness was not all his own. I know the individual to whom you allude—O what a villain ! Tom has told me all about him : he had won money from him at gambling, which the infatuated boy had not the means of paying ; he then acquitted him of the debt upon the condition that he should obtain from me such information as I was enabled to afford relative to what passed when you were at the Priory. I, little suspecting the design,—nor to give him his due, I must say, did my poor misguided son at that time,—readily told all that I knew and conjectured upon the subject, and took the liberty in those confidential communications of expressing my hope and belief that I should see you united to the dear young lady. Thus was I, as well as my son, made subservient to the iniquitous designs of this man. What wonder that the youth and inexperience of my son, should make him a victim to this practised deceiver ? But I don't seek to palliate his vices. The Lord only knows, whose

divine pleasure it has been thus to afflict me in my favourite child, how I have been bowed down by them. But I must not repine."

So speaking, his sufferings found a short relief in tears.

He informed me that he purposed leaving London, with his son, on the following day. "I shall not breathe freely or purely," said he, "until I get out of this vicious atmosphere." His fixed determination was to withdraw his son for ever from London: he assured me that the lad was overwhelmed with contrition, and I could easily believe that he had assumed the semblance of it. What he should do with the unfortunate youth, however, he knew not; but when I hinted that he should be disposed of somewhere distant from home, lest he should corrupt his other children, I found that this over-beloved child was not so utterly cast from his father's affections, as he professed, for the old man rather fired at the suggestion: bad as Tom might be, he hoped he was not so bad as that. It is an ungracious office to reason with a parent's affection against his child, but I did what I could to warn him against being again deceived; but I found half my suggestions thrown away upon the affection of the good man, and the other half upon his simplicity and ignorance of the world.

CHAPTER XLV.

LEAVING poor Burgess to his sorrows and his son, let me recall my reader's attention (if indeed it be not quite exhausted) to matters which more immediately concern the principal person in these memoirs.

I was one morning surprised (I will not say disagreeably) by a visit from Captain Axford, who had just arrived in town. Under the circumstances, however, I greeted him with much cordiality, which he affected to return with frankness, although I could perceive by his quivering lip and nervous manner, the agitation which he affected to conceal. At first we conversed upon the topics of the day, but when these were exhausted, there was a long and painful pause. My visitor was the first to break it. He informed me rather abruptly that he was about to leave England.

To my common-place inquiry where he was going, and whether he intended to make any stay abroad, he answered with much emotion that he should be absent some time—probably for ever.

"Indeed! I was sorry to hear it; might I ask why he said so?"

"This country has not only lost all attractions to me," he replied, with a tremulous voice, "but is grown absolutely irksome; I have sold my commission, and shall go into foreign service immediately—probably into that of the Emperor."

"I am really sorry to hear you talk in this manner," rejoined I, with more concern than I had hitherto manifested; "something must have offended you most grievously in this country." He was silent for a few minutes, as if endeavouring to keep down some bursting emotion, and recollect himself; he then spoke with that affectation of calmness, which is always most affecting in a man of sensibility, who cannot restrain his feelings.

"Sydenham, I have learnt with extreme regret that I have been the cause of some embarrassment between you and a person, to whom I cannot trust myself more distinctly to allude. Under a self-delusion, I misinterpreted the kindness of that incomparable individual. My only object in calling

upon you, before I leave the country, is to free you from any doubt which you may still possibly entertain upon that subject. I am a self-deluded fool, that is all. I mistook her sisterly kindness for a feeling of a different nature, and I feel it my duty to assure you, upon my honour, that nothing ever passed between that individual and myself, that can reasonably entitle me to consider myself aggrieved by the preference she has shown for you. I have thought it my duty to make this explanation, and a painful duty it is. Having performed it, you may easily understand that I cannot wish to prolong this interview. Only say that you are satisfied."

So speaking he rose, took his hat, and offered me his hand. I pressed it with unaffected warmth.

"My dear Axford, believe me I appreciate your kindness and generosity, but I do not like to part with you thus. We were honourable rivals for a great prize; fortune favoured me, but I cannot enjoy my advantage, unless you assure me that you are satisfied with the part I have taken in the contest."

"God forbid, Sydenham, that I should feel otherwise! I, who know what you have gained, can most sincerely wish you joy of your success, but—I acknowledge my weakness—I cannot stay and witness your happiness. Accept, however, my very best wishes. Adieu!" And he broke away from me, as if apprehensive of an exposure of his feelings.

Coarse and contemptible, as well as hard, must that man have been, who could have regarded with indifference, much more with any sentiment of exultation, the distress of this most amiable young man. Indeed, I can safely say that I never felt more pain—scarcely less, I think, than that of Alice herself (and I know how deeply and how long it affected her) at his disappointment. Whether, if I had never interposed, she would have at length yielded to his devotion, and his many amiable qualities, and irreproachable character, I do not pretend to decide; but I could not help feeling myself the cause of cutting off all his hopes of happiness. His mind was evidently prostrated by this event, and life presented to him then no spot, upon which hope might anchor. I heard that he left England on the very evening after this interview. For several days after, my spirits did not recover their equilibrium, so much was I affected by the idea of the desolation which I had innocently produced, in the prospects of this excellent and deserving young man.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE world is in the habit of calling marriage a lottery. This I take to be a vulgar error: if by marriage, is meant happiness in that blessed state, I humbly conceive that it is less a matter of chance than success in any other speculation. It rarely happens that people who are arrived at years of discretion unite for the purpose of realizing any romantic notions of felicity, but, on the contrary, for some specific and practical end. Matrimony is sometimes a pure matter of commerce, where each party possesses something which the other wants—as personal accomplishments, for adventitious advantages. Men of rank and fortune frequently marry, because they think it proper to provide heirs. Ladies desire to enter into the connubial state because it is an honour, or because their homes happen to be intolerable to them. This class, I am inclined to believe, is a large one. Persons marry from ambition, or necessity; for convenience, or mere caprice; and matrimony is occasionally nothing more than a legal ceremonial for the union or transference of titles and estates. I believe it will be admitted, that marriages of these descriptions make up the large majority. In which of these, then, I ask, is there anything of speculation? Assuredly they are all cool, rational, substantial matters of business, in which a certain object is proposed, and generally acquired. Even professional fortune-hunters can scarcely be called speculators, for in most cases, cautious inquiries are set on foot, and pretty accurate information is procured, before either lady, or gentleman, becomes committed. Where then is the speculation in matrimony? I know not, except indeed, when children and dotards, who know not what they are about, run their heads into the noose, and then it certainly may be called a speculation, and an exceedingly bad one.

Unreflecting persons talk of happiness as if it was something standard; whereas it is entirely regulated by the character and habits of each individual. The homely adage, "what is one man's meat, is another's poison," is perfectly applicable in this case. One man likes books and seclusion;

another is wholly devoted to rural occupations. A third hates the country and prefers the flags of Pall Mall, to the finest green fields in the world. You will find another manner of man, who partakes of the predilections of savages, and delights in bits of ribbons and trinkets. The high soul finds its element in strife and tumult. The mean spirit delights to reverence the dog in office; and as Plato preferred the errors of Cicero to the sound reason of ordinary men, so this poor creature is more gratified by the contemptuous notice of his superiors, than by the respect of his equals. Are not all these several persons respectively happy in their ways? Transpose them—force one to adopt the views and manner of life of his neighbour, and he becomes discontented and miserable.

Nothing, therefore, can exceed the arrogance and absurdity of those persons, who abuse and pity others for following objects, and living in habits different from their own; as if we had a right to quarrel with our neighbours, because "they have a hair more or less upon their beards."

I was led into these rambling reflections by renewing my acquaintance with Gaitskell the pet poet, who, it will be recollected, married old Lady Margaret Haviland. When their nuptials were announced, every body exclaimed, "What a ridiculous match!" It was a standing subject of ridicule and satire. Some persons affected to look upon it in a graver light, and lamented over the infelicity which was to be anticipated, as a matter of course, from such an union. Yet what was the fact? Neither party could really be said to be under any delusion. The lady was old and ugly; she knew that Mr. Gaitskell did not seek her hand for the sake of her personal attractions, nor did she marry him for rank or wealth, for she knew that he possessed neither: her only object was his society, and that she obtained; the consequence was, she did not repent the step she had taken. Mr. Gaitskell's object was rank and wealth, and he was proud and happy to be the husband of Lady Margaret Gaitskell.

We had exchanged cards, and I had seen him in town two or three times, but we had not yet spoken. Once, he happened to be walking arm in arm with a man of very high rank, and he was so absorbed with the consciousness of his situation, that he had neither eyes nor ears for anything else. Another time, when we met, he was so intent watching for a bow from a coroneted carriage, that I passed by unnoticed. At length, I found him at home. His manner had acquired

much importance and dignity since our last meeting. Instead of calling at a lodging, and finding my own way to his room, as I had done upon paying him a visit last year, I was ushered by a tall footman into a handsome library, where the husband of Lady Margaret Gaitskell was disposed in a rich morning gown, before a table littered with splendidly bound books and new publications.

He rose to welcome me, and in doing so made me feel the difference between a householder of the parish of St. James's and the precarious occupier of a lodging in Marylebone. Then the light frivolous gossiping tone of his conversation had become, in some measure, settled into a less bachelor-like style. He regretted that Lady Margaret was not at home, (she was gone out in the carriage) as he was sure she would have been very happy to see me. He hoped to have the pleasure of seeing me at dinner before I left town, but really there were so many things going on that it was difficult to find a day; however, he would consult Lady Margaret. He spoke of "the Daventrys" rather patronizingly, I thought; and when I eulogized the beauty of Lady Charlotte, and the wit of Lady Elizabeth, he would smile as if pleased, and answer somewhat disparagingly, as a man does, when his relatives or connexions are praised. Then, when I rose to depart, he shook my hand kindly, rang the bell, and assured me he should always be happy to see me. I should find him at home any day before three o'clock.

I am acquainted with few men who are happier in their matrimonial alliance, than my friend Gaitskell.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE fact of an engagement existing between Miss Paulet and myself was now pretty generally asserted; for facts are subtle, as well as stubborn things, and however you may take care to keep them within bounds, they will escape and get abroad. The intelligence caused a greater "sensation" than had been produced by any event, since the marriage of a certain Duke, who had made half the virgin hearts in town sick, by deferring their hopes for five years. The withdrawal of a baronetcy, with a rent-roll of twelve thousand, was comparatively an insignificant circumstance, but it was the qualities of the individual, which attached so much interest to the event.

As I said before, I would rather that the matter should have been kept quiet, until just before the consummation, but as it had got wind, I should have been paying a bad compliment to the lady of my choice, and have been compromising my own independence, had I affected to deny, as if ashamed of, what I was going to do. Much *badinage*, indeed, had I to endure from my friends of both sexes, with the view of extorting from me either confession or denial, but I bore it all with unruffled *nonchalance*, neither admitting nor contradicting the rumour. Palpable were the malice and envy which glared through the ironical congratulations offered me by my fair friends, but I smiled upon their impotent assaults, and by a few well-pointed sarcasms, sent them away worsted from their unequal encounters, their disappointment still more embittered, and hatred and fear added to malice and envy.

Will the reader believe, that in two or three instances, the excitement caused by the rumour of my intended marriage, had nearly produced public scenes? I speak no more than truth. I will mention a case. A certain young lady, or, to speak more accurately, an unmarried lady,—unless, indeed, all maidens are entitled, by courtesy, to the epithet *young*—however, a certain Miss, with no great personal attractions, and who set up for a *belle esprit*, had taken it into her head,

that I was marked in my attentions to her, and had also inferred that I paid little regard to the vain and fleeting beauties of the exterior in comparison with the more solid and valuable endowments of the mind. To give her her due, she did possess some degree of sense and talent, and generally when we met, as I found her amusing, we used to ridicule the beaux and criticise the pretty fools in the room. I never dreamt of making any impression upon her heart, which I should have supposed to have been impenetrable stuff.

One evening about the time when my match was first bruited, Miss Sowerby, shortly after I had entered the room, and as I was talking to two or three people, advanced toward me, looking like a gorgon, though wearing an air of gay indifference, the most frightful aspect which rage in an ugly woman can assume. Not understanding her object, I did not at first perceive this, though I was struck by something extraordinary in her appearance and manner; but when I penetrated the truth, I really wished myself elsewhere.

Miss Sowerby set on me with a vigour enough to throw the most cool and collected into disorder.

"Here," she cried, in such a voice as to draw the attention of the people, who were standing near, and who turned round to witness the display; "here you may see Benedict the married man. I only heard it this morning, and you can't think how I was amused—nay delighted. I hope you will show your intended; I would go a hundred miles to see her; she must be a faultless monster; surely she can't be one of the black, brown, or fair description."

"How kind and flattering this is of you," answered I, "to take so much interest in my *affaires*, especially as I know that you consider such matters, in general, beneath your notice. I shall certainly have the pleasure of introducing my intended to you; she will of course be the faultless monster in my eyes, though to your's, perhaps, she may appear a monster and not faultless."

"Oh! for my part, I'm no judge; but I've so often heard you find fault with that which ordinary people have thought unrivalled, and declare that there was no such thing as perfection under the sun, that I have some curiosity to see your specimen—this flower which, if I mistake not, you found blushing unseen, and very nearly wasting its sweetness on the desert air."

"Now really I should think you were disposed to be se-

vere, if that were possible. If you will have it that I am to wed, let me wed in peace."

What passed farther between us, I don't distinctly recollect; all I know is, that the Lady grew more violent, and in proportion I became calmer and more keen, until perceiving in the countenances of the spectators the absurdity of the situation into which she had betrayed herself, and enraged at not having succeeded in disconcerting me, she absolutely burst into a passion of tears and rushed out of the house!

I incurred a good deal of harmless ridicule by the disastrous passion of Miss Sowerby, who was a very eccentric person, masculine and even vulgar. She was highly related by the maternal side, and was in the habit of talking of "her blood." She was obliged to leave London in consequence of her absurd conduct towards me.

But some of the enemies of my marriage, who were not manly enough to display their feelings openly, had recourse to anonymous letters, of which I received not a few upon the subject. Some of these were very bitter, others scurrilous, and two or three very disgusting and atrocious. Such proofs of my importance ought to have been very gratifying to my self-love.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

I suppose Lord Truro's must be considered one of those cases in which matrimony is a speculation, at least on his side, for the other party knew perfectly well what she was about. Be this as it may, his eyes were very soon opened to the egregious folly of which he had been guilty. Now that the delusion under which he had committed himself, had pretty well passed away, it was impossible but that the society of his wife's family should be absolute torture to a man of the Marquis's high breeding; and from what I could see, his chief care now seemed to discipline them into some sort of humanity, in order to prevent their drawing disgrace upon him in public.

In fact, he admitted as much to myself, when I became well acquainted with him. He acknowledged to me how bitterly he repented of the injustice he had done to his nephew, and that he felt his punishment no more than due. At the same time, he could not, or would not, see the palpably interested motives which had governed his wife; his pride, or his personal vanity, still maintained that she was attached to him; though he fairly owned, that he would not have married her, had he known that, by doing so, he should have drawn down her relatives upon him.

"It is the most unfortunate thing in the world," said he, "that I should be in the Opposition just at this time, for otherwise I might have got rid of the man by some foreign appointment. What I'm to do I know not, for when I hint to him as broadly as I decently can to go away, he almost refuses in plain terms. I declare to you, Sydenham, he puts me in a fever even at home, so you may judge what are my feelings before people. The mother and sister I could pension off, if I could only dispose of this horrid fellow; but the brute is so damned touchy, that I dare hardly remonstrate with him for fear of being called out."

Here the poor Marquis would pour into my sympathizing ear a whole catalogue of complaints and grievances, touching his new connexions. He would describe, in feeling terms,

the misery he endured whenever he went into company with them; the horrors they had perpetrated when so and so were present, and how he had seen, upon these occasions, astonishment, amusement, and disgust, depicted in the countenances of strangers, and how his wife's cursed brother was asked about as a show in the same manner as a Turk, or a Persian, or any other foreign curiosity.

The old gentleman was suddenly silenced, one morning, in the midst of his complaints, by the entrance of the subject of our conversation, the ouran-outang himself.

I had found it necessary, from the first, to behave to this man with *scrupulous and extreme civility*, which, as far as I know, is the only mode by which one can protect oneself against the advances of a disagreeable person. To my eye there was nothing attractive in Mr. Cornelius Cleghorn, for grossness or absurdity when it goes beyond a certain point, excites in me nothing but disgust. It will be easily believed that he tried all the powers of native impudence to force himself into my farther acquaintance, but hitherto I had been successful in keeping him at bay. He had latterly, however, pressed me rather hard, and having found fair means fail, seemed disposed to resort to strong measures, and to try whether he could not bully me into an intimacy with him. But in proportion as he became familiar, I became more profoundly polite, so that it would have puzzled the ingenuity of any but a countryman of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, to pick a quarrel with my manner. The enterprising son of Erin, accordingly, when he found that I always managed to disengage myself from him, took occasion, when I excused myself for the fiftieth time from enjoying the pleasure of his company, to assume a formidable air, "and begged *lave* to inquire whether I knew anything of him, as I seemed to evince a strong disposition to shun his society."

"Sir," said I, with undiminished civility, "I know nothing of you whatever, and therefore, of course, presume that you are everything unobjectionable. I feel highly honoured by the wish which you have, upon several occasions, manifested to cultivate my acquaintance, and regret extremely that my engagements preclude the possibility of availing myself of your friendly dispositions."

"Sir Matthew," answered the savage with a still more determined air, "I don't at all understand the *maning* of this *tratement*; I'm a gentleman, and I beg to inform ye, surr, I'm *discindid* from royal blood—yes surr, from the Milasian kings,

I claim my *discint*. Therefore, don't suppose, surr, that I'm anything *low*, for I'm as good as yourself."

"Sir, I don't dispute it; believe me, I never for one moment thought of making the comparison, but nevertheless, I repeat with regret that I must resist your argument, as well as your entreaty. I assure you, Sir, I cannot be your friend, so pray transfer your partiality to some other object."

"That sounds very like an insult, Sir Matthew," said the savage, with a knowing and still more determined look.

"You have a fine ear, I fancy, Mr. Cleghorn, for detecting such sounds; but let us reason calmly on the matter. You propose to be admitted to my friendship; I tell you, that it is not in my power to meet your wishes. You now seem inclined to try whether you cannot capture my affections by force of arms. But I think I shall be able to prove to you that defeat must inevitably, in like manner, be the consequence of that attempt; for if you should kill me, how is it possible that I can afterwards be your friend? and if I should kill you, I put and end at once to your assiduities: but, as you are a dead shot, and as I likewise am a dead shot, the probability is that our fires may mutually take effect, and then what satisfaction would that be to us? So that you perfectly understand, I hope, that your views cannot be advanced in this manner. Abandon, therefore, I beseech you, the useless pursuit, and accept my best wishes for your success in any other quarter."

The savage stared, as if not knowing exactly what to make of me, as the vulgar phrase is; but perceiving by this time, I suppose, that I was an impracticable person, he ceased to annoy me with any farther importunity.

CHAPTER XLIX.

OF the Axfords, who were so entirely out of my set, I had seen scarcely anything in town, except, indeed, the old gentleman, with whom I had occasionally a few minutes conversation in the House. That speculation, upon which his mind had evidently, at one time, been so much fixed, I mean, of connecting his family with the Paulets, had, since the marriage of Lord Truro, been gradually abandoned. Still he seemed not entirely to have loosened his hold upon it, while the single chance was left, that the unfortunate marriage might be unproductive. This I inferred, from the fact of his frequently making some allusion or inquiry, relative to that possibility, when we met; although he got but little satisfaction; as, in point of fact, I knew nothing about the matter.

One day, however, he arrested me at Bellamy's, with a face full of meaning, and whispered me that he had been informed Lady Truro was *en famille*; was it true?

I assured him that I believed his intelligence was correct.

"Oh, indeed! well, I don't pity Paulet; it was all his own fault (do you understand?) he might have prevented it, if he had played his cards well. Was there ever such a business? a Marquisate and forty thousand a year lost?—but—" as if a sudden thought struck him—"but it may be a girl, and it does not go in the female line—it may be a girl eh, eh?"

"True, and the boy may follow."

"Oh, yes to be sure, there's no knowing—no security; if she has one, why not two, or even half a dozen (don't you understand?)—well was there ever such folly?"

A day or two after this conversation, he came up to congratulate me on my approaching marriage with Miss Paulet, of which he had only just heard. He affected to commend my choice; Miss Paulet was a very amiable girl, and a great favourite of Lady Mary's; in fact she was a very nice person—a very nice person. The only objection to her was, that she had no fortune, he believed, but that could be no consideration to me, &c. If he had known how I stood with respect to the

family he should have been less free in his remarks, but he hoped that I would pardon, for really, until yesterday he had not the slightest suspicion of the happy event that was about to take place. To these civil speeches I bowed low, and from that day forth Mr. Axford ceased to take that kind interest in Paulet's misfortunes and follies, which he had hitherto manifested.

The only person whom I could have wished to avoid, after my engagement to Miss Paulet became known, was Lady Elizabeth Haviland. I must confess that I did not like the idea of encountering the malice and satire, which I was prepared to find called forth upon the occasion. At first, I felt disposed to keep out of her way, which I could easily do, for as she never went into public, I never had an opportunity of seeing her but in the morning, when I occasionally called at the house, and was admitted to her own room, an especial favour, which I believe she granted to very few besides myself. I fear the reader will think it no good sign of amendment in me, that I continued to find pleasure in the society of this person; but really she was so sensible, so clever, and withal (for it must out) so amusingly venomous, that it was delightful variety occasionally to retreat to her boudoir, and laugh at the schemes and foibles of man and womankind.

If it be not almost a contradiction in terms, I should say that Lady Elizabeth and myself were very considerable friends, even though our friendship seemed to have its foundation in heartlessness and contempt of our fellow creatures. She liked me moreover, partly, I believe, because I had exposed and ridiculed the manœuvrings of her family, and had mortified her beauty sister. I had always professed myself to her a contemner of the fair sex, whom I turned into remorseless ridicule, and I knew that she had given me credit, for sincerity, and frequently has she, in order to draw from me some new sarcastic ridicule, jestingly anticipated the day when she would see me the captive of some accomplished fair one, led in silken chains to the altar of Hymen. Six little months had scarcely passed, and the idle prophecy was about to be verified! When I thought of these things, I certainly did not enjoy the notion of meeting Lady Elizabeth, but it would be cowardly to absent myself. Therefore I determined to put a good face upon the matter, to brave the danger manfully, and like many other tremblers, to wear an air of unconcern, as if nothing had happened, and I was perfectly indifferent about it. Accordingly, I took up my hat,

and determined to go at once boldly to St James's Square. On my way, I consoled any qualms which I might have felt, by deluding myself with possibilities—that she might be indisposed (for thank Heaven she was an invalid) or that she might be gone to some missionary meeting. But there was no such good luck. “Was Lady Elizabeth Haviland at home?” The porter would inquire of her ladyship’s footman. My suspense was somewhat relieved.

“My Lady is not very well to-day, Sir Matthew, but I think she will see you.” I would have withdrawn upon this plea, but I was not permitted, the footman was *sure* his lady would see me.

She received me as usual, but I could observe an expression of malice and triumph in her countenance, as of a tyrant who has a victim in his grasp. But that quality which preserves men in the utmost trials and perils—my self-possession, was staunch.

The conversation was, at first, rather tame. She asked me what was going on in the great world, of which she knew only by report, and I told her two or three *piquant* things, with the view of *effecting a diversion*. But she was too intent upon her purpose to be foiled, so I prepared myself for what I saw was inevitable.

“Oh, but,” cried she, “I am forgetting all this time to give you joy!”

Now there was little enough, perhaps, in these words, but there was a great deal in the look, tone, and general manner, with which they were uttered. They effectually alarmed me, and I d—d her in my heart, for the most ill-natured hag, that ever existed.

“To wish me joy!” echoed I, with quiet unconsciousness; “for what pray?”

“Are you not going to be married?”

“Oh, that is what you allude to? I expected from you condolence, instead of ironical congratulations.”

“Condolence! far be it from me to use such an ominous term. But I must confess, I was never more astonished, than when I heard the other day, that you were about to become the happiest of men. At first I would not believe it; I thought it was an ill-natured thing set about by some enemy, but, having had it confirmed by yourself, I can only offer you my congratulations. And now let me hear about your bride elect: she is perfection, I am told.”

“Oh, of course.”

"Then do enlighten my ignorance; and tell me what perfection is, for I haven't the least idea. Is it like my sister Charlotte?"

"Except that my perfection is nearly as beautiful, I know no other point of resemblance."

"Is she wise?"

"She is not a fool."

"Oh, I see, beautiful and blue, I suppose."

"Not so, indeed; nothing more than a good understanding, sufficiently well informed, and an agreeable person, not deformed by affectation or envy. This is my account of her, but she is not generally liked by her own sex; she is too amiable."

"Now I'm beginning to understand you; we say an amiable woman, as a worthy man."

"Well, they are the materials which wear best, and therefore the best adapted for domestic life. I am come to that degree of experience, to estimate very lightly those showy commodities, which look very well for ornament, but when you attempt to apply them to practical purposes, turn out to be mere lacker."

Lady Elizabeth, as yet, had not succeeded in giving me as much annoyance, as she had no doubt proposed, and I had calculated upon. Her malice, however, was not easily wearied, and she continued her efforts to throw ridicule upon my marriage, but I had now acquired complete confidence, and was enabled to parry her strokes of satire, and in proportion as I became more cool and imperturbable, she grew heated, and, in some measure, lost that self-command, without which you can never hope to inflict a wound. Her remarks were too palpably bitter and spiteful, for malice was no longer under the command of wit. I gave her to understand pretty plainly, that I saw what was passing in her mind, and took my leave, triumphantly felicitating myself upon my easy escape, and feeling but little inclination to repeat my visit, or indeed to keep alive my friendship with Lady Elizabeth Haviland.

CHAPTER L.

It was now the beginning of August, and the unusually protracted session was drawing to a close. It does not fall within the province of this work to give the detail and result of the great measure, which had been propounded to parliament, or rather to the country, for to the mighty voice of the latter, had the former been constrained, in a great degree, to yield. It is sufficient to say, that the excitement gradually wore itself out, and the well-meaning majority had subsided into that state, which rendered it accessible to the voice of reason. The happy consequence was, that a prudent compromise was entered into, angry feelings were allayed, and the principle of moderation was adopted, with the almost general consent of those, whose opinions were of importance.

Under these circumstances, the position of parties was materially altered. That to which I belonged, which was a middle one, between stubborn stagnation and extreme danger; professing to respect the signs of the times and to adapt itself, though slowly and cautiously, to the moral and economical revolutions produced by time; this party, which was composed of men of sound heads and immaculate characters, rose rapidly in public estimation. Ministers soon began to be seriously sensible of our increasing importance, and made anxious overtures for a coalition. But we took high ground. The government endeavoured to fritter us away by negotiation, but this we cut short, by stating a few specific and peremptory propositions, to which we required a speedy and categorical answer. Before they decided, they looked to the country, but found distrust; they turned to a high quarter, but were alarmed by a dubious countenance. Our terms were therefore unhesitatingly accepted. We had stipulated that certain members of the existing government should be dismissed, and that we should nominate to the vacancies, that certain rumoured cabinet measures should be disclaimed, and pledges given for the adoption of others, which we advocated.

The new arrangements were speedily completed, and

received the acquiescence of the country. Mr. Palmer took high office, and the ablest members of the party, of which he was the acknowledged head, were admitted to considerable power.

It will be presumed, I flatter myself, that my humble claims did not pass altogether unnoticed in these changes. They were tendered, indeed, a splendid compensation; Mr. Palmer in drawing up the list, did me the honour to make his first application to me, and requested that I would permit him to name me for an office second only to his own, and entitling me to a seat in the cabinet. The offer was too great to be immediately accepted or declined, and I was allowed the utmost possible period for consideration—forty-eight hours.

I lost no time in communicating to Alice, by letter, the distinction which was placed within my reach, desiring the benefit of her opinion upon the subject. I received her answer the same evening.

“Your note has filled me with a complication of feelings—pride, joy, and embarrassment. I am proud to find the exalted estimation in which your talents are held thus early: even were I to consider your application for my advice merely as a mark of your regard, it would afford me the deepest gratification, but I cannot and will not regard it in this light, though I scarcely dare hazard an opinion with the view of influencing your decision.

“If I were assured that your services in the government would be of importance to your country, I would not, for an instant, listen to the suggestion of my private feeling. To see you in so exalted a station, and discharging its duties in such a manner as to secure the admiration of your countrymen, would indeed yield me the most heartfelt delight; but oh, Sydenham, let me venture to entreat, that you will not too readily be governed by the dictates of ambition. Do not think me ignorant or selfish, if I disclose my undisguised feeling, and acknowledge to you that I view with reluctance and apprehension, the probability of your accepting Mr. Palmer’s offer. I have been thinking about it ever since I received your letter, as you may easily believe. I need not remind you of all the engrossing claims of public life. Are you content, or is it imperative upon you to sacrifice for it everything else; I will not add another word upon the subject, for perhaps I have already been presumptuous. I only

entreat that you will let me know your determination, as soon as it is formed.

"Ever faithfully yours,

"ALICE PAULET."

A man who is vacillating between contending arguments or inclinations, is glad of a straw to turn the scale. Had my disposition, however, been much stronger towards the acceptance of Palmer's offer than it was, the light in which Alice put it as a sacrifice of private happiness, and which I perfectly understood, delicately as she adverted to it, would have decided me in the negative. I wrote therefore to Palmer, expressing all that was incumbent upon me to express upon the occasion, but declining to incur the cares of public business. I cordially promised him, however, my best support, as a Member of the House of Commons.

The office which I had refused, was accordingly bestowed upon a most able and efficient person and a considerable friend of mine. The kindness of Palmer, however, did not end here. He wrote to me a few days after, to state that his Majesty had been graciously pleased to intimate, through him, his pleasure that I should take my seat in the Privy Council. This flattering and distinguished mark of consideration, I, of course, accepted with gratitude, and I was sworn in forthwith. At the same time, with equally emphatic kindness and respect, it was intimated to Mr. Paulet, that a peerage, with the rank of Viscount, and a high office in the Household, would be conferred on him, if he wished, but these honours were severally respectfully declined. He preferred a private station, and nothing but necessity, or the commands of his sovereign, should induce him to enter public life.

Nothing farther now detained me in town. Had I consulted my earnest inclination, I should have pressed upon Alice to remit the remainder of my term of probation, but I abstained, from a sense of delicacy, which I knew she would appreciate. In two months, I should be at liberty to claim the rich reward of my constancy, but though this period was not inconsiderable in a lover's estimation, yet I hoped to fill it up with business. It was generally understood that the session was to be closed by a dissolution, and the election would occupy me that time at least, for I had already published my address to my native county, for which I was to stand on the Government interest, with another gentleman, against the nominees of the Marquis of Daventry, who had

gone into furious opposition, in consequence of having been refused a vice-regal government, for which he had applied under the new arrangements.

Before I left London, I gave a farewell dinner to the flower of my old acquaintances and friends. It did not go off with as much brilliancy as usual. Some *badinage* was passed off upon my approaching change of situation, but it was neither rich nor rare. I was prepared for all the common-place jokes, which I knew I should have to encounter, upon the occasion, and finding that they made no impression, my friends desisted from wasting their wit.

The illustrious club of good fellows paid me the compliment of a dinner upon the melancholy occasion of my withdrawing from their society. Mr. Lutwyche presided; and proposed my health for the last time, observing, that the next time they met, they should have the melancholy pleasure of drinking my memory.

I rose to return thanks.—“Gentlemen, you will credit my sincerity when I assure you that it is not without regret I bid you farewell. My excellent friend in the chair has expressed his doubts, whether there be much wit in the step I am about to take, but there is an old proverb, which affirms, that every man must eat a certain quantity of dirt during his life, and in like manner, I believe it may be said, that the wisest must be guilty of a certain proportion of folly, before he dies. Now, I hope, that the adventures and practices of my past life, not omitting my attendance here, may have nearly made up my ration of the latter, and that I may henceforth live in sobriety and good sense. I make no attempt to convert the Pope and his Cardinals, for I know that you are all sworn foes to matrimony, and most religiously eschew the pleasures of domestic life. All I can say, therefore, is, that the resolution I have taken is the result of deliberate conviction, and that if I find upon experience, that I have been in error, I hope you will again receive me among you. Wherever I may be, I must always, in remembrance of past times, continue your sincere well-wisher both as a body and in your individual characters. Therefore permit me to propose a toast—‘Health and immortality to the Inimitable Livers.’”

CHAPTER LI.

My reception in the country was such as to convince me, that not only my own return, but that of my friend and coadjutor Mr. Maddison, was certain. Nevertheless, Lord Haviland did as much as he could to annoy, but on the day of nomination he was not forthcoming, and accordingly the Sheriff declared "the Right Honourable Sir Matthew Sydenham, and Edward Maddison, Esquire, duly elected."

I was enabled likewise to defeat the Havilands upon their own filthy dunghill, the precious borough of P——. After a close contest, in which my candidate was vigorously and venomously opposed by Mr. Ball, Lord Haviland, who had fallen back upon the borough (his creature Jackson having given place to him) was compelled to yield to a young gentleman of distinguished talents, whom I had recommended to the electors, this being one of the places which had been *eunuchized* by the Reformers.

The tide of fortune having thus run as smooth with me in public, as in private life, I retired to Sydenham, to await, with as much patience as I might, the period when my happiness was to be consummated. In the mean time, however, I was not idle; I found an interesting employment in making preparations for the reception of my bride, and studying those minute and delicate attentions, which are so gratifying to the heart of woman, and which experience had taught me were no less delightful for the man of refinement and feeling to bestow upon the object of his affections. With the particulars of these, however, the reader has no concern. But my cares were not terminated by the furniture of a boudoir nor the arrangement of a flower-garden. I endeavoured to consult the tastes and wishes of Alice in more important particulars. I inquired into the condition of the tenantry, and, as far as I could, removed every abuse, so that they might present as fair an appearance as possible to their lady.

That which I esteemed the especial nuisance of the neighbourhood was now, to my great gratification, abated. Mrs. Chilton had ceased to preach the Millenium to the good

people of P——, and to concern herself in the intellectual and moral growth of their children. She had gone elsewhere, to announce the battle of Armageddon, of which she declared that her ears could now faintly distinguish the approaching rumour, and her eyes dimly discern the glittering panoply. In plain truth, this lady's system, which had now time to develope itself, had proved to be as mischievous as most other systems, which propose to adapt human nature to their Procrustean models. The case of the Pollards, which the reader will recollect in a former volume, was not a solitary one; many other parents had reason to bewail the day, when they permitted their children to be placed under the tuition of this weak and vain, though, I am perfectly willing to admit, perhaps in the main, well-meaning woman. The same maxim of policy, however, which forbids ignorance of the law to be admitted as an excuse for its infraction, likewise denies to mischief-makers the benefit of good intentions, which, if allowed, would afford a cloak, under which knavery and folly might continually tamper with sacred things. The beneficial effects of Mrs. Chilton's absence had already become apparent, in the healing of religious dissensions in families, in the returning to the church of those persons, who had been seduced from its mild and rational doctrines, by the sound and fury of the cowhouse.

I was exceedingly pleased at the opportune removal of this annoyance, for I had no mind that Alice should be engaged in anything like a contest with Mrs. Chilton, whose opinions, both on religion and education, differed so entirely from those, which the former entertained, and had enforced with such beneficial effects at the Priory. I had frequently conversed with Alice upon the subject of the P—— sibyl, and though she would remonstrate with me upon the harshness with which I was accustomed to express my reprobation of anything that offended me, and in this particular case thought me much more stern than was justifiable, giving Mrs. Chilton full credit for good intentions, and allowing them more weight in *foro conscientiæ* than I could accord, she was still convinced of the folly and presumption of a female setting herself up publicly to expound the word of God, even though she should not deviate from the line of orthodoxy, and agreed with me in thinking her fine theories of education a serious evil. I knew, therefore, that she would be highly pleased to hear of Mrs. Chilton's departure.

CHAPTER LII.

ALTHOUGH I was interdicted from keeping up a correspondence with Alice, Lady Eleanor Palmer, who was staying at the Priory, indulged me with frequent letters, in which I was assured, that all was, as I could wish, in a certain quarter.

As a specimen, I will extract a part of one of the lengthened communications, which I was in the habit of receiving at this time from my kind and excellent friend.

"I am sorry to tell you (though I should not be surprised if the intelligence afforded you but little regret) that Alice seems unwell and out of spirits. Your vanity will, no doubt, render it unnecessary for me to point out the probable cause. The truth is, that the dear girl's mind is by no means at rest with respect to the solidity and permanence of your attachment. I only wish you could view unobserved what passes here, and I should no longer be provoked by the doubts which you occasionally hint (you know you dare not openly express them to me) of her capability of a strong feminine attachment, because she is so sensible, reflecting, and prudent. One would suppose, to judge from the manner in which you talk and write, that you believed none but fools, and giddy thoughtless girls—the very persons who have been the constant objects of your ridicule and abuse—could entertain that devoted and ardent sentiment called love, as distinguished from warm friendship, founded upon esteem and a sympathy of tastes, which you seem to suppose is the more accurate description of the feelings which Alice entertains towards you. With all your worldly knowledge and boasted penetration, I will make free to tell your wisdom, that you do not yet comprehend what a pearl of great price is the love of a virtuous woman; but I hope and believe, that before you are a year older, you will have learned to appreciate it. Alice cannot sigh and talk sentimental nonsense, and go through all the scenery of an *affaire*, I admit, but the placid surface of her manner covers a depth of feeling which, I fancy, is not to be

found in those who superficially display much more agitation.

"But I do you the justice to believe, that you are not altogether sincere in these suspicions; you cannot be really ignorant how much the dear, incomparable girl, has suffered on your account;—yes, and continues to suffer. She is apprehensive for your affections, and with some reason, but you have none whatever for doubting about her. She flatters you, by her fears, that you are not exempt from those changes and caprices, which are incident to persons of extraordinary mental endowments. She has the noblest confidence in you as a scrupulously honourable and high-minded character, but she says that your past life is not the best guarantee that you are qualified for domestic happiness. Your life, it must be owned, has hitherto been one unvarying scene of excitement and dissipation, redeemed certainly by some traits of divinity, but the general tenor apparently heartless and immoral. It is from these reflections, that the lively imagination of her, whom, though I knew it was only to call forth my indignation—you once compared to a Grecian statue, faultless but cold—conjures up chimeras that your constancy may be more worn out, even before the expiration of the term, when you are at liberty to claim her as your bride, and that, still worse, you may repent after you are irretrievably committed. She is haunted by the idea that, after a time, you may find ennui at home, and again be tempted to seek for happiness in worldly pleasure. You cannot but confess that there is some foundation for these fears. Your cause is, however, earnestly advocated; my darling Jane is your staunch friend; she says that Alice should not employ her ingenuity to your disadvantage, that it is unfair to think of the past, for that you have now sown your wild oats, and are coming to a steady time of life (what do you say to that?) and when she finds argument fail, as usual, supplies its place by the energy of her own feelings. She earnestly declares, 'I am sure he will prove all that we can wish or desire; I was never so much deceived as I should be, were Matthew Sydenham to disappoint our expectations, but I know he will not.' Little as you deserve it, I am still likewise your advocate, and Jane and I by turns celebrate your praises, to which I can assure you Alice listens with no small complacency."

Had I not reason to consider myself the most fortunate of mankind? In the apprehensions which Alice expressed with

regard to my future conduct, I found the best security that it should be irreproachable. For what man, deserving the name, could be indifferent to a beautiful and accomplished woman, as long as he was satisfied that she continued devoted to him? Lady Eleanor was right in supposing that I never really doubted her affection; for though I knew that women of strong minds have seldom very warm affections, yet when both were combined, the latter were always in proportion, and I had seen enough of Alice to be assured that she was not deficient in the most important characteristic of her sex.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE period of probation was now within a few days of expiring, and accordingly I wrote to Alice. I stated at length, and in the most emphatic language I could command, my views and feelings, which were the same that I had expressed in London six months before. I assured her, as I truly might, that I had examined myself thoroughly, and had subjected the matter to the most calm deliberation, the result of which was a deep-rooted conviction that our sentiments and tastes possessed that degree of sympathy, which must ensure our happiness in an union through life. I implored her, therefore, if she placed any confidence in my sincerity, if she believed that I had any knowledge of my own mind and heart, and lastly, if time and absence had effected no alteration in her feelings toward me, not to suspend my happiness by any farther delay.

To this letter I received by return of post the following reply :

“Priory, September 4, 18—.

“I cannot lose a moment in answering your most grateful letter, although utterly incapable of expressing all that I feel at this moment. I shall attempt no more than simply to make myself understood, which is best done by confessing, without farther disguise or restraint, the happiness with which your letter has filled me. Yes, dearest Sydenham, your love is, indeed, to me the greatest of all earthly blessings. Believe me I have the fullest confidence in you in every respect; it would be ungenerous to doubt after the earnest and heartfelt terms, in which you have expressed yourself. I thank Heaven that I had firmness enough to resist your importunities, although powerfully seconded by my own wishes, to consent to our marriage six months ago, for then I should not have accompanied you to the altar with that delightful security which I now experience. Forgive me then, dearest, for wronging you so far as to demand this delay, as a criterion of your sincerity, and ascribe it to anything but indifference,

from which I once heard with the deepest pain, you suspected it to proceed. I know, however, that you have been disabused of this error, and it shall henceforth be my care to render it impossible for such a suspicion ever again to cross your mind. I am sure I need not say how anxious I am to see you. My agitation is so great that I can hardly hold the pen. God bless you, my dearest Sydenham,

“And believe me ever your affectionate

ALICE.”

“The Right Honourable Sir Matthew
Sydenham, Bart., M. P.”

Reader, if you have ever been in love, you will easily believe, that within an hour of the receipt of this letter, I was in my travelling carriage, rolling over the road to the Priory, with all the speed that four horses could muster.

The reader, no doubt, anticipates most of what remains to be told. Why should I describe scenes, which, however interesting to the actors, are notoriously flat and wearisome in detail. The happiness of the principal parties, the joy of Lady Jane, and the fervent manner with which Paulet welcomed me as a member of his family, can be imagined. I eagerly pressed for an early day, nor did Alice affect to resist my wishes. An early day was therefore fixed.

The interval was for the most part, occupied by the necessary arrangements. By the desire of Alice, in which I cordially coincided, the ceremony was to be strictly private, and to be performed by our worthy friend Burgess, in the parish church. The members of the bride's family alone were to be present, with the exception of our mutual valued friend, Lady Eleanor Palmer.

CHAPTER LIV.

BEFORE I draw to a conclusion, it will perhaps be expected that I should give some account of what became of several persons, who have figured in these volumes.

Of the Havilands little remains to be told. Deprived of the great political power which they had possessed for half a century, they withdrew from the court in dudgeon, and went abroad, where the Marquis, disgusted with his disappointments, threatened in future to spend his princely fortune. Lady Charlotte Cookson ended her career, about two years after her marriage, by accepting the protection of a noble Duke, much celebrated for his choice collection of beauties. Her husband, like a sensible man, went to law, and received the handsome sum of ten thousand pounds, in exchange for a worthless wife. He subsequently assured me that he considered himself as having made an excellent bargain. Lady Elizabeth, as she advanced in years, grew more devoted to religious pursuits. Upon Lord Daventry's death, she lived in her brother's house, in the situation of the maiden aunt, her caprices consulted, and her sarcasms smilingly endured, by her nephews and nieces, for reasons which she perfectly understood. At length she was deposited in the family vault, and the affectionate attentions of her relatives were rewarded by legacies of fifty pounds each, to buy mourning rings. The bulk of her fortune, being nearly forty thousand pounds, was bequeathed to the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," and various other religious and charitable institutions. Lastly, I must not omit to mention that a treaty of marriage was concluded between Lord Richard Haviland and the heiress of Elmwood, in consideration, it was said, of one hundred thousand pounds paid down, and the reversion of the noble property after the death of Mr. Jackson.

The latter name recalls to my mind that unhappy relation of my own, whom I now mention for the last time. He was not long a burden upon my bounty. His miserable end was

worthy of his life—his body was found in the Seine, with the head nearly severed from the body. It was supposed that he had been murdered by a young Frenchman of rank, of whom he had won a large sum of money, which the former could not pay without ruin. As there was, however no sufficient evidence against the nobleman, he was unmolested. Although I was of course shocked at the horrible manner of my uncle's death, I certainly could not but feel satisfied at his removal, for as long as he lived, I did not consider myself secure from his machinations.

Poor Burgess never held up his head after the disappointment of his son. He had set his heart upon this boy, and not all the worth of his other children could recompense him for the frustration of the hopes which he had formed, with the infatuation of a doting parent. The young man proved utterly incorrigible. Violent and openly profligate natures are not desperate, but the subtle and hypocritical are impracticable. The good Vicar was advised, and after postponing the measure until the last moment, when convinced by repeated instances that there was no chance of amendment, he consented, to article his son to an attorney, as the profession best adapted to his genius and character.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING thus dismissed the inferior part of the *dramatis personæ* from the stage, it only remains for me, the principal actor, to say a few words, by way of taking leave for ever of the gracious reader.

This work, then, I should say, was originally a mere journal, exhibiting a history of my life, a record of my reflections upon various occasions, and the progress and changes of my character and opinions. It will be seen, that it commenced life with a preconceived notion of the meanness of human nature. This prejudice was fostered by my early experience, and I persuaded myself into misanthropy. I have said at the commencement of my memoirs, that I was a person of a cold heart, with a vivid apprehension of the odious and ridiculous. Nay, I even persuaded myself that virtue was incapable of exciting an interest in me, and that I delighted in the contemplation of the baser features of human nature. I internally disapproved of and regretted these propensities, and with a view to correct them, went abroad, like Diogenes, in search of honesty;—with what success the reader of the two former volumes of these memoirs may judge. Virtue I found to be a cloak assumed to conceal the foulest deformities. Many who take up this book will, I am aware, soon throw it away, under the impression that the writer is a cold-blooded dissolute person, who sat down with the deliberate design of villifying human nature; but I confidently hope that the more patient and discerning readers, who may bear with me throughout, will admit the justice of my applying to my own character the following passage from one of the invaluable essays of a profound thinker and accurate observer of man :—

“I am far from thinking that all those who have depreciated our species have been enemies to virtue, and have exposed the frailties of their fellow-creatures with any bad intention. On the contrary, I am sensible that a delicate sense of morals, especially when attended with a splenetic temper, is apt to give a man a disgust to the world, and to

make him consider the common course of human affairs with too much indignation."

Such sentiments as I professed in the earlier part of my memoirs, I am happy to say, are now in a great measure, supplanted by more liberal and kindly feelings. Vice, selfishness, and folly, are, no doubt, the predominant characteristics of that society, which calls itself, by excellence, the World; but it would be exceedingly erroneous to take that as a specimen of the world and human nature in general. Still I am by no means an optimist; I still see much to disgust and displease me, nor can I ever be brought, after what I have experienced, to place any confidence in outward appearances; I have only ceased to presume ill of every person who approaches until I have received most ample and satisfactory proof to the contrary.

Reader, I will not detain you by dry and stale morality, but, in bidding you farewell, content myself with expressing my cordial wish that my fair admirers (forgive the presumption of Matthew Sydenham!) may not think it beneath them to cultivate the virtues and graces of her who is, in my eyes, perfection; and that my male friends will take a lesson from the authentic memoirs of one, who may say that he has occupied a very high and brilliant station in the eye of the world, how inadequate are such hollow and precarious gratifications to solid and permanent happiness.

NOTE.

THE Right Honourable Baronet's Memoirs here close somewhat abruptly, and as it is possible that the reader may have some curiosity to obtain a degree of insight into the domestic life of the autobiographer, the Editor takes the liberty of publishing a few letters which afford sufficient information upon that subject. How he obtained possession of the subjoined documents is a story with which the reader will hardly care to be troubled.

LETTER I.

Mrs. Trefusis, to Lady Sydenham.

"MY DEAR ALICE,—I cannot suffer a day to pass after our return to England, without writing to you, such is my anxiety and *curiosity* to know with what aspect fortune seems disposed to regard your marriage. It is now of more than four months' date; the novelty, therefore, is nearly worn, and you may now be enabled to form some notion of your prospects. To you, who never can find happiness abroad, marriage is indeed a matter of vital importance, and I know that you entered upon it with fear and trembling; but I hope and believe, that your mind has, by this time, been convinced, that there is no cause for apprehension. You know that I never considered your *marriage* such a formidable person, as you and most other people did. I always said he was a person who would require a very little management to make and keep him tractable. Yet you would persist in disturbing the favourable opinion of his character, which you derived from your own discernment and good sense, and in making yourself miserable by listening to the gossip and folly of other people, because you looked upon him with partial eyes. You

had been told that dissimulation was at the head of his catalogue of imperfections; that his character had no settled shade, but took its colour from the society he was among; that he was heartless, malicious, and unprincipled. To my dismay, I must confess his subsequent conduct to you seemed to corroborate all these impressions; but the cause was happily explained, and then you appreciated those traits of a noble and a kind nature, which I told you of him. Still you could not reconcile to your *beau idéal*, some passages in the life of your hero; and seemed to think that I was excusing immorality, when I said that I doubted whether it was to be considered a bad symptom for a young man not to set out in life with too much sobriety and prudence; and when, by way of apologizing for any little irregularities and vanities of our friend, I reminded you that he had been for two years the most admired man in London, with a provoking perverseness you answered, that such a person would be ill calculated to appreciate the happiness of private life.

"I only remind you of all this, my dear, because I am convinced that you will, by this time, feel persuaded that my opinions and advice were not those of an ill-judging friend. Still you must not be alarmed, should you have found him as yet quite broken in; a little management—now do not start away at the word, as if I was going to recommend female art to usurp the office of love—a little management then, I repeat, may still be necessary to keep him in order. Your baronet is, no doubt, a very incomparable person; but at the same time he, like every body else, has his little faults. If anything can be regarded in two lights, he will be apt to take the unfavourable point of view. Now you must not, upon these occasions, gravely set about arguing him out of such an error, but rally him upon it, and laugh it off. He is somewhat capricious too, permit me to say, and takes disgusts into his head for no sufficient reason; and if you were to be strait-laced upon all occasions, it is probable that he would take offence at it. These little things, believe me, are worth attending to, and do more to maintain the harmony of married life, than is dreamt of in your philosophy: therefore, do not disdain to employ tact, which I know you have been in the habit of regarding as an unworthy instrument.

"Let me hear from you soon, my dear Alice, and believe me ever,

"Your affectionate,

"C. TREFUSIS.

"P. S. I saw poor George Axford at Paris. He looked distracted, and told me he was going to offer his services to the Emperor. Poor creature, he must be dreadfully in love! What you have to answer for!"

LETTER II.

Lady Sydenham, to the Lady Eleanor Palmer.

"My dearest friend's last letter was most welcome, because it encouraged me to hope that I should soon see her as my guest. Indeed I am most anxious that you, who have had so large a share in promoting, should come and witness, my happiness. Your kind heart will, I know, find its richest reward in being an eye-witness of that happiness which, but for your exertions, might never have been experienced.

"I may indeed venture to say that, with respect to myself personally, I have not a wish ungratified. I have found him, in every respect, to be such as you described. Everything that you said of the generosity and nobility of the mind, the ignorance of every low and petty feeling, has been amply proved. But you could not be aware of the unwearied and delicate consideration which is so inexpressibly delightful, because it can proceed from nothing but the warmest attachment, and the utmost refinement of mind. I need not tell you of the brilliancy and variety of his conversation; but, perhaps you are yet to learn that those unrivalled powers of instruction and amusement are constantly exerted for my sole benefit; yet I once supposed that these dazzling accomplishments were displayed only for admiration, or for the purpose of sacrificing the other sex to his vanity. I blush with remorse to think how I have wronged him, but in reflection I find additional cause of love and gratitude to you, my friend, for disabusing me. Our marriage is certainly as yet recent, and forgive me, dear Lady Eleanor, if I sometimes am unable to prevent a fear from crossing my mind, that time may make an alteration—that this happiness is not to last—that this life will grow monotonous to him. O pray persuade me out of such a fearful apprehension. I had a kind letter, a few days since, from Charlotte Trefusis, who cautions me to guard against such a possibility as I have named. I shall endeavour to profit by her hints, which are excellent. My

great consolation is, that my husband's manner towards me differs from that sort of fondness, which I have seen young men display towards their brides. He never shows his devotion before people; his attentions toward me are those of a most affectionate husband, but still I can never forget that he is a man of the world, and a man of sense. This leads me to hope that I shall never experience a change. I know that I need not apologize to you for filling up my letter with my own personal interests, for I know that you entirely sympathize with them. Let your next name the day when I may expect you, and believe me,

"My dearest friend,

"Your most grateful and affectionate,

"ALICE.

"P. S.—Charlotte mentions in her letter that she saw George Axford at Paris, and that he was looking ill. This is the only drawback to my happiness. To hear that he had overcome that unfortunate preference would be a great relief to my mind."

LETTER III.

The Lady Jane Paulet to Sir Matthew Sydenham.

"ARE you such a high and mighty personage that you cannot condescend to answer my poor letter? Full a fortnight ago I wrote to you, and not the slightest notice have you yet taken of my despatch, for I cannot deign to accept as an acknowledgment the cavalier and disrespectful message you sent me by Alice—'Tell Jane I received her letter.'

"If I kept up my own dignity, I would take no farther epistolary notice of you, but I doubt whether that would be any punishment, therefore I shall content myself, Sir, with enjoining you to show me, and any future letters with which I may be disposed to favour you, more respect. You must, however, be informed that St. Leger claims an equal share with myself in the purport of this letter, which is earnestly to request that you and Alice will pass your Christmas with us, to meet the same party that was with us last year. Now do not attempt to write anything in the shape of an excuse; come you must, nor do I think that either you or Alice will

be very reluctant to celebrate the first anniversary of your meeting at the dear Priory. For my own part, I consider it, *next to one*, the happiest day of my life.

"How I shall delight in seeing you, who in your insolence once boasted (as I have heard, and can easily believe) that out of any given three women, who were not previously engaged, you would undertake to gain the affections of one within three months, for a wager of as many thousand pounds, but could get no one to accept the challenge—how I shall rejoice to see such an insolent man converted into a poor tame, harmless Benedict! The accounts which Alice writes of you, from time to time, are very encouraging. She says that you were rather restive at first, but that you are daily becoming more and more docile. I once thought myself a very knowing person, for I gave her instructions how to manage you, according to the best of my judgment and experience, of which I can assure you I had no mean opinion, but I now find that the pupil can teach the master. There is a very profound remark upon the subject in her last letter, in which she says, that there are two classes of husbands, the fools, who, like, donkeys, can neither be coaxed nor kicked into anything, and the men of sense and spirit, like generous steeds, which can be governed easily, if they are not allowed to see by what means. Answer this letter immediately, and in the affirmative, or I am no longer

"Your affectionate

"JANE.

"St. Leger has come in, and takes the pen from me to add a line. He has given me a sad scolding for what I have written about Alice, and insists upon declaring 'the whole a fabrication of my own, without any foundation whatever.' It is very mortifying to make this confession, and I am placed in the awkward dilemma that I cannot venture to excuse myself for doing it, because I was compelled by my husband, having just before boasted that I had the tyrant under my subjection!"

LETTER IV.

Sir Matthew Sydenham, to Mr. Palmer.

Sydenham Park, May, 18—.

“MY DEAR PALMER :

“ALTHOUGH you have given me two days to deliberate upon the proposal contained in your letter just received, I have no reason for hesitating a moment to answer it. Whether your most flattering offer is dictated by personal friendship, or a flattering estimate of my capabilities, I am bound to tell you frankly, that my private feelings are averse to the conspicuous and responsible station, which you invite me to occupy. I am so well persuaded that you can find many men, at least equally able, and more willing than myself, to discharge the duties of a cabinet minister, that I tell you at once, how I am disposed with respect to your offer; but should you, for any reason not explained in your letter, be particularly desirous that I should accept the vacant office, I would not for one moment be withheld, by any selfish reluctance, from affording my king, my country, or my friend, whatever benefit either could propose to derive from my humble services.

“You, my gifted friend, who have always been addicted to the ‘infirmity of noble minds,’ will perhaps be unable to understand my feelings, when I assure you that Ambition, though I was perhaps at one time somewhat dazzled by her splendour, has no longer any charms for me. Within these two years, I have been taught to appreciate a life fraught with more solid and permanent happiness, than any which Ambition can afford—not so brilliant indeed, but still equally useful, although confined, but commensurate to the abilities of the individual. Ambition is a stern mistress, who will accept nothing less than the whole man; this I have not now to give, nor will I be seduced from one to whom I owe the tenderest allegiance, to pay devotion to this haughty and capricious temptress, albeit she is, as you say, a goddess, and is disposed to favour me with her smiles. In my more youthful and ardent days, I may not have been daunted by her fiery passions, which the most vigorous of her votaries could not satiate, but, in the endeavour, have fallen victims to her insatiable lust. Now, however, no longer *calidâ juventa*, I am

not tempted to sacrifice, for the sake of her splendid favours, the tranquil security, and, if you will, obscurity of private life.

"Again accept my best thanks for this and all other kindnesses. With fervent wishes that success may attend all your undertakings,

"Believe me, my dear Palmer,
"Your most obliged and faithful friend,
"M. SYDENHAM."

"Right Hon. John Palmer."

The Editor has selected the above from a number of letters in his possession, relative to the Sydenham family. Before he closes the work, it may be proper to mention a few events which the Right Honourable Baronet has not himself recorded.

The Marchioness of Truro died in giving birth to a son and heir, who survived. Lord St. Leger, when a child of only five years, succeeded, by the death of the Marquis, to the title and estates; his lordship's cousin, Mr. Paulet, and Sir Matthew Sydenham are his guardians. The Marchioness's family returned to Ireland upon her ladyship's death, and Mr. Cornelius Cleghorn was killed in a duel about three years since.

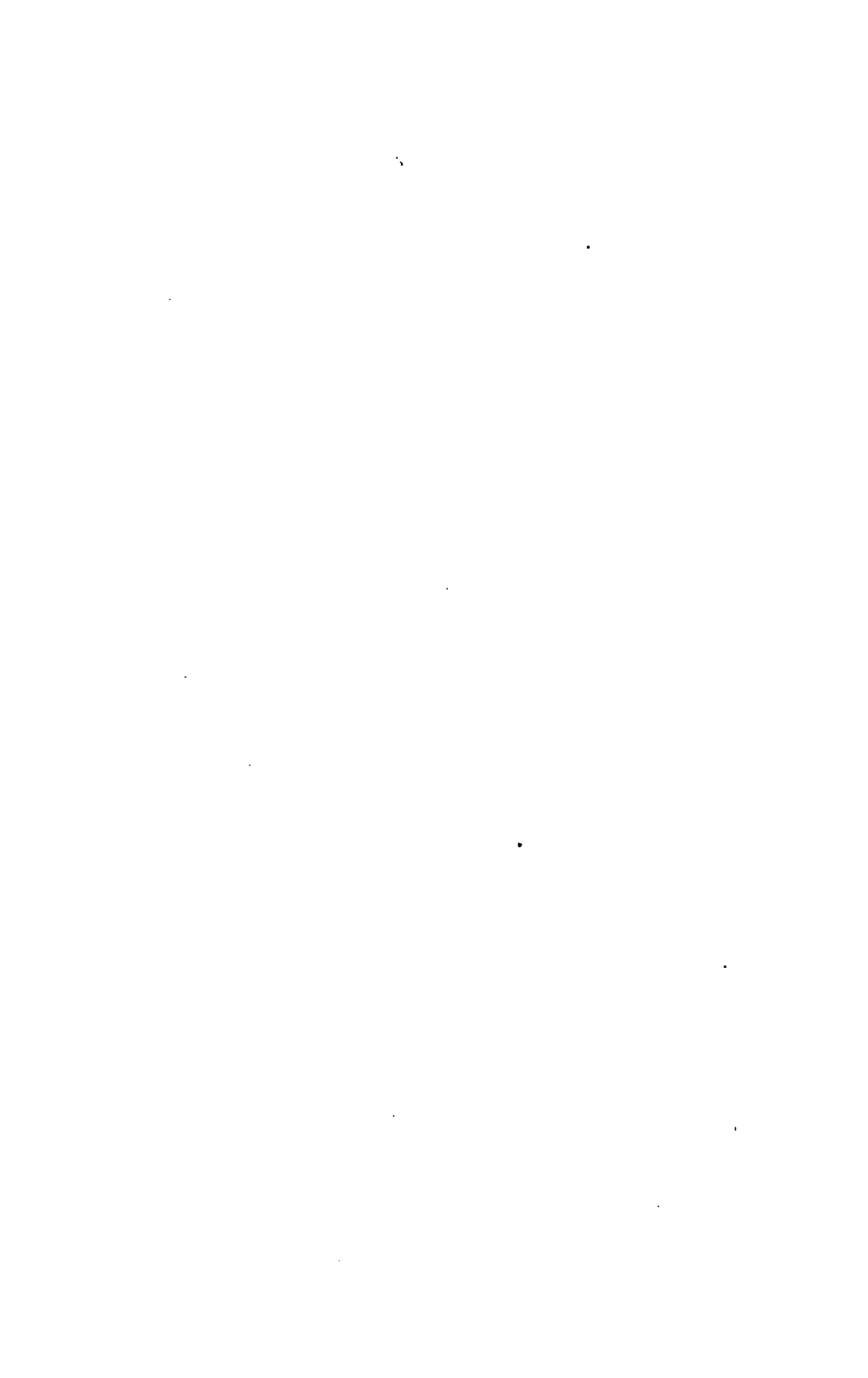
It gave Lady Sydenham great satisfaction to learn shortly after her marriage, that Captain Axford was united to a young lady of great accomplishments and amiability.

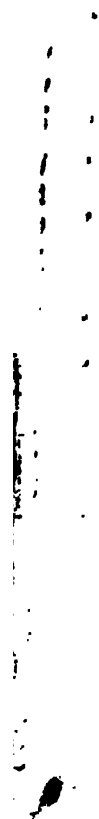
Mr. and Lady Jane Paulet are not blessed with children, but the young Marquis of Truro, who lives with them, supplies the place of any offspring of their own. He is a most engaging young man, and is said to promise considerable talent. He looks up to Mr. Paulet as his parent, having, in fact, scarcely known any other; and it would seem that Lady Jane could scarcely feel a stronger attachment for a child of her own, than she evinces toward the young lord.

Sir Matthew and Lady Sydenham have at present three children, two sons and a daughter. Their happiness still continues uninterrupted, because their love is founded in mutual esteem and sympathy of character.

THE END.







CHESNUT STREET.

SEPTEMBER, 1833.

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